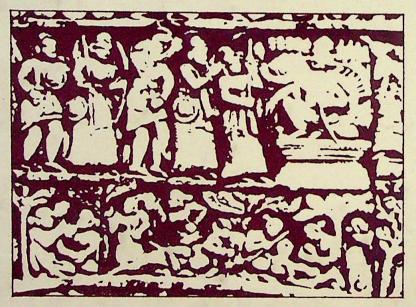
Digitized by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust.

A STUDY ON THE RAMAYANAS



040

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Preface	1
The Rākṣasas	13
The Vānaras	31
Allegory	45
Vālmīki Rāmāyaņa and other Rāmāyaņas	51
The Poet	97
Rāvaņa as the Tragic Hero	108
Women's Role in the Rāmāyaṇa	122
Bibliography	130
Index	135

Digitized by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust.

PREFACE

The Rāmāyaṇa has been acclaimed very widely as a wonderous creation of literary endeavour which reflects human behaviours, ways of thinking, ideals, attitudes and imaginations of an extensive comprehension revealed through poetry of a highly elevated style. Since outpoured in flowing rhythms of śloka verses the muse of Rāmāyaṇa has roused myriads of people to derive endless benefits of mental, moral and spiritual nature serving as a vast store of cultural reservoir to receive sustenance from Rāma's wanderings through a long sequence of complexities always acting with unassailable judgement, unfailing personal fidelity, redoubtable courage and formidable gait and equanimity feature as a most outstanding achievement of Vālmīki not known to have ever been surpassed in any literary creation here or anywhere else.

Composed at some very remote age the Rāmāyaṇa had found itself crossing over to wide distances cutting across the perimeters of racial, religious and communal boundaries, bringing to millions of weary hearts strength, solace, peace and sustenance of a very abiding nature. Whether based on historical reality or created through rich literary imagination, Rāma had, in course of time, been made into an incarnation of god Vishnu and was held as a cult-god by a group of people of Vishnuite persuasion. Rather than projecting Rāma as a god-incarnate, Vālmīki reveals in his hero all the characteristics that a normal human being may have in possession and elevate those to a precipitous height of complete perfection. Rāma is imbued with all human qualities, strength, wisdom, respect for superiors, adherence to truth, love and affection for dear ones, compassion and beatitude for people under his care and courage and fortitude of the highest order, qualities with which Valmiki made his hero a human entity of perfect, complete and fully self-contained stature. And the way in which Vālmiki makes his story take its course, bearing upon the environment and circumstances, vivid imagination and dramatic situations, has proved to be of forthright and spontaneous appeal to human heart irrespective of cultural upbringings and religious and communal affiliations of diverse order. Though held as a Vaishnava document wherein the hero is held as an incarnation of Vishnu, the human import of the Saga could hold good which such dissenting creeds as the Buddhists to whom Rāma came to be held as a Bodhisattva, a former incarnation of the Buddha himself and to the Jainas as a śalākāpurusha, a person of outstanding stature. Carried to distant countries inhabiting large masses of people belonging to diverse ethnic groups, the Rāma Saga turned out to be thoroughly absorbed and integrated in Central Asia (Khotan), Java, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia, and Rāma became a hero to each of such people as their own.

Europe's contact with India has brought into play a critical attitude to all significant elements and outcrops of Indian tradition and the Rāmāyana, for obvious reasons, has come to be subjected to severe analytical probe giving rise to appraisals and theories of widely varying nature. Of the early European critics of the Rāmāyana: two most well-known had been the scholars named Weber and Lassen. Apart from tracing influences and borrowings from the Greek epics of Homer they also traced in the Rāmāyana a spread of cultural domination of Aryan North over non-Aryan South of the peninsular sub-continent of India. India has been from time immemorial the habitat of peoples consisting of very wide and diverse ethnic and cultural pursuance, but never before the Europeans had endeavoured, inspired undoubtedly by their colonial designs, to dig up these differences, India of course had no real awareness of these differences and implications of the same as insinuated by colonial interest. The merit of this evilbearing hypothesis, given rise to by Max Müller, has not only vitiated the entire field of Indological studies, the false pride it has generated; among many caste groups, the emergence of community like the Arya Samaj and last but not the least the Dravida bogey raised in the south are some of the outcomes of the crooked mischief issuing out of this, will continue for long as deep unsettling factors and hazards in the way of Indian regeneration. Probably any evils instituted with purposeful intuition cannot get withered without bringing in its wake fruits to the propounders of such evils; this premise can well have been very truly substantiated in the holocaust befalling Europe, brought about by the super assertable right on the part of peoples claiming to be Aryans of varying purity.

Since such critical approach to the Rāmāyana had been started, the endeavours of appraising and assessing the Rāmāyana from various angles of vision tend to be on the increase with the passage of time, revealing the unfading popularity of the Rāmāyana Saga in spite of its remoteness in age as well as changing approach to literary and cultural documents of classical origin. Coming from the pen of an arduous student of Indian traditions, who has been connected with the greatest collection of antiquities bearing on Indian civilization, and who is also posted with a number of languages in which critical appraisal of the Rāmāyana has been attempted, the present work will, I hope, be read with considerable interest and pleasure. The author has revealed here a deep awareness about the immeasurable wealth of the Rāmāyana as a reservoir of wisdom, ideals, morals and behaviours held as cream of Indian tradition and has made a very clear and lucid exposition of the same in the narrations and findings presented by him.

Starting with a critical view of the contents, the authorship and the date of the text, the study proceeds to enquire about who actually were the Rākshasas and the Vānaras, held as the adversaries and the allies respectively of the hero of the epic. The effort on the part of the author to show that both these, though represented as non-human, were actually human elements placed at different wave-length of culture stands out to be given a very careful consideration. In his chapter on Allegory he examines the opinions expressed by quite a host of authorities right from the European authors like Weber and Lassen to such eminent persons as Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Vivekananda and Rabindranath. Of other features in the work, the study and summary rendering of Rāma tradition as treated in literary works starting from early Sanskrit authors like Aśvaghosha and Kālidāsa, the texts found from such distinct areas as Khotan in Central Asia, in Java, Thailand, Cambodia, and also in the local languages of India will certainly be considered as an extremely valuable component of the treatise that the author has ventured to present. The Rāmāyana has been held at a very high level of respect over wide areas and by people of widely varying ethnic, linguistic and cultural background. In his evaluation of the Saga the author has made every endeavour to reach this ever-sprouting fountain of reverence and reveal this with a deep and commendable humility of his own.

It is indeed a rare opportunity to be able to write a preface to a book which I think is of considerable merit. The ideas and

INTRODUCTION

Lexicographically an epic means a long narrative poem that relates heroic events in an elevated style. Literally, an epic is a long poem that needs a grand theme, a grand hero and a grand style. And such heroic events and grandiosity are evinced in the Rāmāyana, as presented by Valmiki, the celebrated sage-poet of India. No definite date of the incidents on which the work was based, the date when it was composed and the date of the poet who composed it, can be ascertained. It is also not certain whether the characters, as depicted by the poet Vālmīki, like those of Rāma, Rāvaņa, Laksmana, Sītā, Hanumāna, Vibhisana and others were actually in existence or they were merely the poet's creations, based on episodes current during his time. Still, there is hardly any other work which could gain so wide a popularity as that of the Rāmāyana in India and over a wide area in Southeast Asia throughout centuries. The story of the Rāmāyana is popular not only in every part of this country but it has laid a great impact on many trans-Indian regions. From the 2nd century A.D. when, it is said, its composition reached the final stage, down to the present century the story has been told and retold, written and rewritten, translated and retranslated in almost all major languages of the world. Hardly we find any other work which has influenced so much the mind of man, as a whole. The reason of this popularity perhaps rests on the fact that the epic has blended actuality with idealism, philosophy with religion, culture with society, rationality with animality, passion with morality and past with the present.

The epic can be studied in relation to man, in relation to society and in relation to divinity. It does not relate merely the story of a prince banished by his father searching for his beloved, lost by chance and winning her back punishing the wrong-doers, but it tells the story of some personalities who are the embodiments

of courage and patience, pride and arrogance, vileness and treachery, chastity and generosity. That is to say, the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana$ is based on something which is universal and impersonal and is not, therefore, confined to any particular time or region (and clime). It has become an epitome (the soul) of all ages.

There is in the epic a galaxy of characters, each having its own individuality, own importance but at the same time is purged from narrow bindings and has become a type. Although these characters belong to two opposite groups, or camps or tribes there were many things common to both and in some traits like valiance, learning and demeanour we can hardly distinguish one from the other. It might be that the poet at the time of describing the strife between two opposing forces had, knowingly or unknowingly, weighed both of them on a scale of parity. Thus he finds the spirit of devotion in Hanumana of the Vanara tribe, the excellence of learning in Ravana, the demon-king of Lanka, the sense of justice in Vibhisana of the Rāksasa tribe, the essence of virtue in Guhaka, Sabarī and Sugrīva, all belonging to the non-Aryan tribes. And speaking about the super culture of the Aryans the poet has indirectly expressed admiration for the high quality of the non-Aryan culture.1

The epic in relation to man presents all types of character.2 There are husbands who are weak to submit to passion and are obedient to wives; there are kings who know only to feed their own grudges; there are brothers who are ready to help their elders at the cost of their own happiness; there are servants who risk their own lives for the sake of their masters; there are wives who are not merely angels but souls of their husbands; there are women who love deeply; there are women who live wanton life. Like Geoffrey Chaucer and William Shakespeare the poet of the epic is an observer, an acute observer, who observes in the minutest detail the life and environment of men of his time, or of men whom he has known from tradition. It cannot be said with certainty that whatever was presented by Vālmiki is concerned with his period; on the contrary, there are many things in the epic which are already sown in the tradition of the country and these were only borrowed by the poet.

As we know there are men and women in the epic, but there are goblins, monkeys, rākṣasas, and demons. These abnormal creatures are presented more often by the poet as normal human beings in attitude and behaviour. All of them speak the language of man, feel like man, live and die like man. They are fabulous, yet so human. In essence they are all like men. Whatever un-

human-like has been imposed in them is to warrant the episode dramatically.3

In relation to society, the poet, in the epic, presents three cultures—the culture of the Rāksasas, the culture of the Vānaras and the culture of the Aryans. Among these three cultures he has referred to people belonging to some tribes like the Sabaras, the Kirātas, the Guhakas and the Nisādas. He himself perhaps mixed (?) intensively with these tribes. In composing the poem Vālmīki is possibly led to describe the spread of Aryan culture represented by the Rama group towards the South, beyond the Vindhyā region, which was, as known from the epic, infested by different pre-Aryan tribes, amongst whom the most predominant were the Rāksasas who were familiar with urban culture. Quite naturally the poet has had to make the Aryans represented by the Rāma group face an encounter from the most powerful tribal group, viz. the Rāksasas. There is, however, no evidence that Rāma, the prince of the Iksvāku lineage, has had to really encounter the Rāksasas. This may be a pure invention of Vālmīki himself. The whole episode of the encounter may be the creation of the fertile brain of the poet or borrowed by the poet from other sources. The names of the Rama group are familiar in Northern Indian but the names of the characters of tribes of the Southern India, as depicted in the epic are quite unfamiliar and these are, therefore, coined by the poet to justify the situations as presented in the long-drawn poem.4

In respect of the Rāmāyana's relation to divinity it will be interesting to note that Valmiki did not try to transform his hero, Rāma, into any divine being. On the contrary, he, under the advice of Nārada, made himself ready to narrate the story of the best man (narottama). His story is the story of an ideal man who exhibits his idealism in every aspect of man's life. establish the idealistic view of life the poet has had to introduce such high qualities which led his hero to cross the bar of human world and enter the realm of divinity in later period.5 When all is beautiful with Rama the finite enters into the infinite and the man-Rāma became the God-Rāma. It will not be out of place to state that nowhere in the portion of the epic, delineated by the poet, Rāma is any god or any divine incarnation. He is only a man, but a perfect man. And because of his perfection he could easily claim his position as a godly incarnation in later period, that is in Books I and VII, which are later additions to Valmiki's composition or in other works on the Rama episode like the Rāmāyanas of Tulasīdāsa, Kamban, Pampa, Krittivāsa

and others.⁶ Nonetheless, that the glorious Rāma could fight out the odds by his own might supported by divine aids are verily the fable elements. The Rāmāyaṇa is a heroic poem and the embellishment of supernaturalism is a must, so to say, for such heroic poems. Gradually, these supernatural qualities paved the way for the hero to step into a supra or divine being.⁷

For over 2000 years the Rāmāyana, like the Mahābhārata, has been influencing deeply the religious and moral thought as well as the literary production in India. In fact, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata are, declared Vivekananda, 'the two encyclopaedias of the ancient Aryan life and wisdom, portraying an ideal civilization, which humanity has yet to aspire after'.8 According to Macdonell, 'Probably no work of world literature, secular in its origin, has ever produced so profound an influence on the life and thought of a people as the Rāmāyana'.9 The Rāmāyana represents but the finished product of the antecedent process embedded in the gathanarasamsis (songs in praise of men). The recital of the nārasamsīs formed an essential part of the religious ceremonials at the sacrificial and domestic rituals. These hero-lauds supplied real parallelism with epic poetry, approaching it both in language and metre and became a significant link in the development of epic literature. From a comparatively short extent and simple subject-matter the nārasamsīs gradually developed into lengthy ballads and various song-cycles with intricate plots.

The epics dealt with the deeds of kings and heroes, descriptions of wars and practical philosophy. At first, confined to the royal courts as court chronicles, once these epics came into the hands of the *sutas*, they reached a larger circle comprising the

entire populace.

In the Rāmāyaṇa Rāma of Ayodhyā is made to play a very important part in the expansion of Aryan culture in the South. It was probably an account of the signal service attributed to him in colonizing the Deccan, and spreading the Aryan religion far in the South and rendering it free from the continuous harassment of aggressive and semi-barbarous tribes. As a matter of fact, the expansion of Aryan culture in the South was the result of the hearty cooperation of the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas in carrying the banner of Aryanisation.

The Brāhmaņa missionaries who accompanied the Kṣatriya conquerors, introduced the essentials of Aryan culture and tradition to the masses, converted the principal figures, and passed the way for social and cultural contact by allowing high-born Aryans to marry with the non-Aryans. Agastya, the pioneer among the

Rsis to erect a hermitage in the trans-Vindhyan regions, preceded Rāma by generations. It was he who paved the way for later Aryan adventurers to cross the Vindhya and carry the Aryan banner. The story of Agastya reveals the important part played by the Brāhmanas in the spread of Aryan civilization over southern India. The ancient Rsis undertook missionary enterprise and helped in the propagation and diffusion of the Aryan culture by their active efforts, often to considerable risk to their lives. They moved in large numbers to distant lands, and performed sacrifices and observed religious rites in their new settlements. genuine missionary spirits, coupled with their peaceful character, not using any force nor resorting to retaliation despite provocation, helped in creating a favourable atmosphere for the reception of the Aryan religion. The Rsis mixed with the aborigines and civilised them. The Aryan spirit was kept alive by the Brāhmanas, not by the Ksatriyas, but, without the protection of the chief, the Brāhmanas were powerless, and it is not the Brāhmana's peaceful penetration, but the military exploits of the chief that enthralled the popular imagination.10

Rāma's expedition, as described in the Rāmāyaṇa, did not put the non-Aryan of the South under the political subjugation of the Aryans, but it brought the southern territories of the Vānaras and the Rāksasas as protectorates under the sphere of

Arvan influence.11

The Rāmāyaṇa has generally been accepted until modern times as a homogenous work by a single author, Vālmīki. Critical examination now suggests not only that it must have passed through many stages of development, but also that it contains numerous interpretations, and the addition of Books I and VII. Moreover, the passages representing Rāma as an avatāra of Viṣṇu must also be regarded as additions, hardly consistent with the very human terms in which he is generally portrayed by Vālmīki in the original poem. Thus in the present form it is a combination of loosely related elements, considering romantic and allegorical legends and stories, half-mythical, half-historical, and some scanty descriptions of the aboriginal inhabitants and the country of southern India. Nonetheless, as the first national epic of India, the Rāmāyaṇa is unique in respect of the cultural history of the Deccan, relating to a period, if not anterior to Troy and Memphis, as M. N. Dutta suggests,12 at least to a period subsequent to the Aryanisation of the major part of northern India.

There is evidence indicating that the Rāmāyana was composed in the area of this country of which the capital was Ayodhya,

the royal residence of the race of Iksvāku. Thus it is stated in Book I that the Rāmāyana arose in the family of the Iksvākus; the hermitage of Vālmīki is described in Book VII as situated on the south bank of the Ganga; and the poet must have been connected with Ayodhya, for Sīta, Rāma's wife, sought refuge in his forest retreat, where her twin sons were born, brought up and taught to recite the epic by the poet. In or near Ayodhyā, therefore, Valmiki may be assumed to have worked into a homogenous whole the various epic tales current among the court bards of Ayodhyā about the life of the Iksvāku hero Rāma. This poem was then learnt by rhapsodists, who wandered about reciting it in different parts of the country.

In the story of the Rāmāyana as told in the original books two parts can be clearly distinguished. The first is an ordinary narrative of human life without any admixture of mythological elements. Beginning with the intrigues of a queen at the court of Ayodhya to ensure the succession of her son to the throne, it describes the results that followed. Had the poem ended with the return of Rāma's brother to Ayodhyā after the death of their father, King Dasaratha, it might have passed for an epic based on historical events.

On the other hand, the second part, being founded on myths, is full of marvellous and fantastic adventures. The theory was formerly held by Lassen and Weber that the narrative is an allegorical representation of the spread of Aryan culture to the south of India and Ceylon. This view is, however, not borne out by the statements of the epic itself. The poet is evidently unfamiliar with the south, which he fills with the fabulous beings that might easily be imagined to haunt an unknown country.

There is much more probability in Jacobi's theory that the second part of the original Rāmāyana represents a narrative of terrestrial events based on mythological elements traceable to the

earliest Veda.

The name of the heroic Sītā appears in the Rgveda13 as the personified furrow invoked as an agricultural goddess. In ritual work of the latest Vedic period14 she appears as a divinity of the ploughed field, a being of radiant beauty, black-eyed, adored with lotuses, the wife of the rain-god.

In the Rāmāyana itself Sītā is said to have arisen from the earth when her adoptive father Janaka was ploughing, and in the last book she finally disappears underground, received into the arms of the Mother Earth. Her husband Rama would then represent Indra, and his fight with the demon Ravana, a modifica-

INTRODUCTION

tion of the Vedic conflict of Indra with Vṛtra, the demon of drought. It is here probably significant that Rāvaṇa's son is called Indrajit, 'foe of Indra', which is an epithet of Vṛtra in the Rgveda. The rape of Sītā by Rāvaṇa is parallel to the abduction by the demons of the cows later recovered by Indra.

Again, Hanumāna the chief of the monkeys, who aids Rāma in flying hundreds of leagues, to recover Sītā from the island of Lankā, is the son of the god of the wind and bears the patronymic Māruti, 'son of Marut'. This suggests a reminiscence of Indra's association with the Maruts or storm-gods, in his fight with Vṛtra. The name of the dog Sarama, who for Indra crosses the river Rasa in search of the captured cows, reappears as that of a demoness who consoles Sītā when imprisoned by Rāvaṇa in the island of Lankā.

The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa aims at presenting faithfully a picture of the Rāmāyaṇa culture as drawn by Vālmīki himself. The poet's study of the extant Indian culture was, however, personal but the result of his study, as presented in his magnum opus, is impersonal. And that is why his thoughts and ideas are not bound by any time and clime, they became, as it were, the ingredients of all ages. Its importance as a source for the reconstruction of the cultural history of post-Vedic India is enhanced by the fact that, unlike the Illiad and the Odyssey, it is intimately linked with the present religious faiths and social ideas of millions of India.

It is always absorbing and fascinating to investigate into the plentudinous cultural data afforded by Vālmīki. It may be said that nowhere else in the world have the people left such varied and abundant information about themselves as have the ancient Indo-Aryans.

A study of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa from the cultural aspect is more than of mere academic significance. The epic has exerted a profound influence in moulding India's culture through the ages. Thus, the Rāmāyaṇa rightly is the backbone and vertebral column of Aryan civilization. 'In it (Rāmāyaṇa) cosmogony and theogony, human and extra human beings, Asuras and Dānavas, Yakṣas and Gandharvas, Siddhas and Chāraṇas, folk-lores, anecdotes and legends, stories half-mythical and half-historical, descriptions of cities existing a period long anterior to the age of Troy and Memphis, and the chronicles of kings that reigned long before Priam and Busiris—all these with others too numerous to enumerate have been woven into the mighty web and woof of the magic drapery evolved by the so portent art of Vālmīki.'15

REFERENCES:

¹ Tradition says that Vālmīki, who was an Aryan, led the life of a non-Aryan for a pretty long time and this may be the reason why the non-Aryan characters of the epic are adorned in many places with Aryan qualities. Sometimes the choice of estimation fell on the non-Aryan groups, for example, the description of the city of Lankā, the abode of the Rākṣasas, excels that of Ayodhyā, the home of the Sūryavamšī Aryans. Then again, Rāvaṇa, a non-Aryan, is well versed in the Vedas and is adept in Vedic rites and a great scholar in Sanskrit and so is Hanumāna. Or it might be the deliberative attempt of the poet to depict the important non-Aryan characters of the epic with Aryan qualities.

² The depiction of women in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa is so graphic that it tends to turn the epic into a story of woman rather than of man. It has been described by some critics as strī-prasanga (woman's episode) as contrasted with the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavad Gītā which are characterised as dyūta and chora-prasanga respectively (gambling and stealing episodes): See T. Sundaracharya: Studies in the Rāmāyana

Woman Characters, Madras, 1945.

³ Cf. Carriban in The Tempest of Shakespeare and Chauntecleer in the Nun Priestes Tale of Chaucer. Cf. also Beowulf and European mythology,

specially German and Greek.

Etymologically, their names are interesting, almost all of the names relate to bodily features: Kumbhakarṇa—pot-bellied; Surpaṇakhā—having fingernails like winnowing fans; Bāli or Balin—tailed-son of Indra, born from his mother's hair (bāla); Meghanāda—cloud-noise, i.e. thunder; Mandodarī—narrow-waisted; Vibhīṣaṇa—terrifying; Sugrīva—nice-necked, a son of Sūrya; Hanumāna—heavy-jawed, a son of Maruta (vāyu, pavana).

This topic has been dealt in detail elsewhere in this book.

⁶ It may be remembered that the *bhaktivāda* (devotionalism) did not lay its firm root in the soil of the country when Vālmīki lived or composed his poem (c. 6th-5th cent. B.C.).

⁷The same has been the case of Kṛṣṇa being transferred from a charioteer to the All-conscious, Omniscient god.

8 Complete Works, vol. IV, 4th ed., p. 97.

* Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, vol. X, p. 574.

¹⁰ Kennedy, J R A S, 1915, p. 516.

- "Viswanatha, International Law in Ancient India, pp. 23, 45. In this context it may be remembered that in the spread of Aryan culture in the country, Kṛṣṇa of the Mahābhārata has no less a contribution. He belonged to the Yādava clan and was well-known as a politician and a religious teacher. He was a national hero and later like Rāma he was regarded as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. He held liberal and catholic views and his doctrines helped in the spread of Aryan ideas among the so-called Sūdras.
- ¹² Introduction to his translation of the Rāmāyaṇa.

¹³ IV.48.6.

- 14 Kausika Sūtra, 106.
- ¹⁵ Dutt, M. N., Introduction to his translation of the Rāmāyaṇa.

I

THE RĀKŞASAS

In the context of Rāksasa culture it will be interesting to discuss in relation to the Vālmīki Rāmāyana about the traits and character of the Rāksasas whose leadership was vested in Rāvana, the king of Lanka, as can be gleaned from earlier sources. Although the term 'rākṣasa', derived from 'rakṣas' meaning protection, in later mythology 'rākṣasa' is an evil or malignant being. In the Rgveda 'rākṣas' is anything to be guarded against or warded off, harm, injury or damage; 'raks' in the Rgveda means to guard, protect, watch, take care of, save and preserve. There are about fifty references to the term 'raksa', both in the singular and plural, but no rāksas is mentioned by name, nor is there any reference to their physiognomy. In the same way the Rgveda speaks of the Dasyu meaning Rāksasas or Yātudhānas as being destitute of, or averse to religious ceremonies (akarman, avrata, apavrata, ayajyu, ayajvan), as practising different rites (anyavrata), as godless (adeva, adevayu), haters of prayer (brahmadvisti), as inhuman (amānusa), ferocious looking or with fierce eyes (ghora-chakşu), as flesh-eaters (kravyād), devourers of life or insatiable (asutrip), as eaters of human flesh, monstrous in form, and possessed of magical or superhuman powers. It is quite possible that the author of the Rāmāyana may have borrowed many of the traits which he ascribes to his Rāksasas from the hymns of the Rgveda.1

In the Rgveda the rākṣasas have not been described as any tribe but an object of menace to the Aryans and this is clear from the signs of the struggle between the devas (suras) and the rākṣas (asuras). This struggle may point out to the fight between the rākṣas (non-Aryans) and the Aryans who always invoke devas to come to their aid in times of distress. It is evident, therefore, that the rākṣas by their valour would create terror in the minds

of the Aryans. As a matter of fact, in all the hymns the destruction of the rākṣasa is prayed for. Agni, Indra and Soma are the three agents through whom they are sought to be destroyed. Agni is often called raksoghna, raksaha.2 Indra obtained the epithets rakṣahan (rakṣas-killing: I.129.77), hanta-rakṣahan (VII.194.13). Soma is adored for having killed the raksasas (VII.104.2; IX.1.3; IX.67.20).

Thus we find that during the Vedic period the Rāksasas were prevalent in the northern India, the home of the Aryans. The Aryans, who used to come often in clash with this warrior people, fought constantly to get rid of them. Before the time of composition of the Rāmāyana by Vālmīki the Aryans were successful in driving them away far into the south. In this perspective the reference to the Rāksasas made by Pāṇīni is interesting. According to his Astādhyāyī (V.3.117) while illustrating a rule about fixing a, he gives a list of names indicating warrior clans and in these names appears the term raksasas. According to the rule the term 'raksasa' indicated one belonging to warrior clan and presumably these Rāksasas of Pānīni were descendants of the Rākṣasas of the Rgveda. If Pāṇini is a near contemporary of Valmiki, the latter did not refer such clans or tribes living in around Kośala, his own land, or Ayodhyā, the place wherefrom the Aryan Rāmachandra made his sojourn to the South in quest of Sītā. It is plausible that the rākṣasas by the time of Vālmīki have already crossed the Vindhya region3 and took refuge in the vicinities and further south in Lanka; the region in and around the modern Madhya Pradesh was perhaps infested by the Dasyu tribes with whom Vālmīki, as known from tradition, mixed intimately during his early days.

The description of the raksasas in the Ramayana corrresponds in many respects to traits applied to the similar class of beings, the Dasyus (whether we take them for men or demons), who are so often alluded to in the Rgveda.4 Patanjali, the great commentator on Pānīni (c. 200 B.C.) mentions Rāksasas as one of the tribes as following under 'Pārśvadigana' (or Persian etymological group). According to him the Rākṣasa means a person against whom protection (i.e. raksa) is required in the performance of Vedic sacrifices. The name clearly denotes an actual people of very ancient lineage found in the extreme northwest of Sapta-Sindhu. Today there is a tribe called Rākṣanis in the Ghagai district of Baluchistan. Like the Piśāchas, the Rākṣasas fought in the Mahābhārata on both sides of the combatants, thus establishing their historicity.5

In the Rāmāyana we see the Rāksasas as infesting the hermitages and settlements of the Aryans, as obstructing the sacred rites, as eaters of men, as terrific in appearance, and as changing their shapes at will. The constant encounters of the Rāksasas with the Aryans in the region clearly indicate that while the Rāksasas made effort not to allow the settlement of the Aryans in the South, the Aryans attempted repeatedly to oust the Rāksasas culminating in the great battle fought between Rāma and Rāvana with their respective armies. In that fight the Aryan Rāma was not only helped by the whole group of the Vanara clan but also by Vibhīsana, a deserter of the Rāksasas and Mātali, Indra's charioteer. It cannot definitely be said whether Rāma could win the battle had he not been supported by Vibhīsana and the Vānaras. Besides, Rāma with his group was sometimes hackled by the Rāksasas and he had to take recourse to trickery and divine help to crumble the mighty power of the Rākṣasas. In this sense, the killing of Meghanada by Laksmana begs question which is open to criticism in so far as the law of war is concerned.6 Notwithstanding the high ideals, war in ancient India was not always fought in accordance with the noble principles of combat laid down in many of the Dharmaśastras. Treachery, brutality and utter viciousness are also advocated in our ancient texts. The glory of Dharma may be the theme of our song, but the refrain is sometimes the reverse.7

In the Rāmāyaṇa we have many instances of reverse practices of war morality. Guile, magic, delusion etc. were occasionally encouraged. The Rākṣasas are said to have created faith in the enemy-camp and destroyed them at the appropriate moment. They produced artificial dead bodies of the leaders or lord of the enemy soldiers and thereby tried to demoralise them. They fought without being seen through magical practices. Similarly, there were Vānaras who were well-versed in the art of disguising themselves. These references bear testimony to the fact that the poet himself was adept in war polity and it might be that he had practical experience of war strategy and statecraft. This is clear from the Yuddhakāṇḍa where the two leaders of the opposing forces and their lieutenants have been presented as veterans in war techniques.

The Rākṣasas are sometimes associated with the Panis who, in the Rgveda, has been depicted as a rich community. But as they did not follow the norm of performing sacrifices they were looked down upon by the Vedic Aryans who used to call them 'Vrātyas' or fallen Aryans because of their habits. And they were sometimes moved away from their original homeland, if they could

not be reclaimed by a process of purification and 'conformist oath-taking' known as 'vrātyostoma'.⁹ Paṇis, as represented in the Rgveda were merchants and usurers as a class they were niggardly and averse to perform sacrifices involving the distribution of large guerdon, had leaders who were pious and generous donors. Thus Balbutha, who is called a Dasa, might have been one of such, and he is mentioned alongwith Tarushka and Prthuśravas as a giver of gifts to the hymner in the Rgveda. Brbu, a 'takshan' (carpenter) who is stated in the Rgveda itself to have been the leader of the Panis, made generous gifts to sage Bharadvaja, evidently as his sacrifice sessions. In this context, it is very tantalizing to read in 'Punyajana' of the Puranas an echo of the Rgvedic Panis, its ideological equivalent.10 The puranic tradition of Punyajana Rāksasas invading the region may be a memory of the Sind people, the so-called Harappans, intruding for colonization.11

There are Vedic references to maritime expeditions undertaken by the Panis who used to take out ships with large sails and carrying upto hundred oars. The Rgveda contains prayers adressed by ship-wrecked sailors to Indra. The Rgvedic Aryans were a maritime and mercantile people; not only are the sūktas familiar with the ocean and its phenomena but we have merchants described as pressing earnestly on boardship, for the sake of gain. It is possible that the Panis embarked on foreign adventures and they sailed round the Peninsular India, establishing colonies en route and in Ceylon.¹² The Malay Rāmāyaṇa (c. 16th century A.D.) a copy of which came into possession of Archbishop Laud and was passed on to the Bodleian Library (Oxford) in 1633, is based on the Javanese Rāma legends, 'Rāma Kling'. Here Rāvaņa is banished by his father, put on board a ship and finds himself at last in Serandip (Ceylon).

The Rāmāyana (episodes of which may be dated about 2nd millennium B.C.) mentions Kavatapura as the spacious and wealthy capital of the Pandya empire, which was probably a creation of Pani enterprise. Lanka itself was plausibly inhabited by a prosperous Aryan community who were alleged to have broken all the injunctions (including moral ones) of the Vedic faith through cruelty, deceit and impurity. Incidentally it may be said that the so-called Rākṣasas were of Aryan stock. Rāvaṇa, the king of the Rāksasas, was, as the legend goes, the greatest tapasvin (mendicant) of his age and was himself descendant of Kaśyapa (Pulastya) Rsi, the legendary son of Brahmā. It is very likely, therefore, that the Lanka rulers were themselves Panis, as were probably the Pāṇḍyan kings.13

The city of Lankā, as depicted in the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki, was the abode of the Rākṣasas and bears testimony to the high culture that was bred by the Rākṣasa people. From the description of palaces, fortifications, the learning, military skill and statecraft of the rulers like Rāvaṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa one is convinced to think that the Rākṣasas of Vālmīki attained a high degree of civilization. The earliest inhabitants of Ceylon, be they Veddas or Paṇis or any other aboriginal tribe, in the Rāmāyaṇa they are known as Yakṣas, ¹⁴ Rākṣasas, Asuras, Nāgas and Devas.

It is said that the Arvans penetrated into Ceylon from a very early time and there were several incursions of these Aryans.15 The first incursion was under Skanda Kārttikeya, the son of Siva for the subjugation of Tārakāsura. This legend might indicate the spread of Siva and Karttikeya worship in that land. In the southeastern corner of the city there is a shrine called Karttikeya-grama or Katara-gāma. The connection of Tārakāsura with Lankā is probably referred to in the some verses of the Skandapurāna.16 Scholars like Parker and Obeyesekere are of opinion that Ravana and his family were staunch worshippers of Siva. And the fight between Rāma and Rāvaņa might indicate the conflict of two rival sects-the Visnu worshippers and the worshippers of Siva. The next Aryan invasion was undertaken by Rāma and Laksmana of the Solar dynasty, which was followed by the conquest of Rāvana's territories, the installation of Vibhīsana, Rāvana's brother and Rāma's nominee and the introduction of Vaisnavism in Lankā. The third expedition17 was that of Vijayasimha and his seven hundred followers from Simhapura, a town of Lada or Rāḍha in Bengal which led to the spread of Pauranic Hinduism of Māgadhī and Sanskrit in Lankā which came to be designated as Simhala (c. 547 B.C.). The fourth and the last influx of the Aryans was the peaceful advent of Mahendra or Mahinda, the son of Asoka (3rd century B.C.).18 Thus, we find that in Ceylon different cults were in vogue in different ages. There was at first the cult of Skanda, then the cult of Siva followed by the cult of Visnu which gave way to the Buddhist cult.

If continuous tradition has any value, it indubitably proves that the incidents narrated in the genuine books of the Epic have been associated with various places both in India and Ceylon. Simhala became Sihala-dvīpa or Sihala. In Tamil it became Ilam, Helu or Elu; in Arabic Serandib and in Portuguese Ceylon. The Buddhists gave it the names of Ojadipa, Varadipa and Mandadipa. It was called Tāmraparni (probably after the river Pāṇḍya) which became Tambapanni in Pāli. The Greeks and

Romans designated it as Taprobane. This, according to Codrington, was properly the name of a district on the north-west coast.20 In the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea its earlier name is given as Taprobane and its later name as Palaisimudu or Parāsamudra (lit. on the other side of the sea).21 The present rocky islands to the south-east of Ceylon known as Great Bassas or Rāvana's Fort are said to be the scene of Lankapura. The greater part of Ceylon, as said in the Rāmāyana, has been submerged in the sea in punishment of Ravana's misdeeds and the Great Bassas Lighthouse, which stands out on a solitary rock in the south-east of Ceylon, is still called Ravana's Fort. The Lanka meridian of the Indian astronomers, which was reputed to have passed through Ravana's capital, passes through the Maldive islands at 75-53 15 East Greenwich, quite 400 miles from the western limit of Ceylon.22 Ancient Ceylon is said to have been an extensive region of some thousand miles in extent and to have owed its diminution in a great measure to the largest of many innundations which occurred shortly after the death of Ravana, which according to Simhalese annals occurred about 2387 B.C. (according to William Jones 1810 B.C.). By the further encroachment of the sea in the reign of Pāṇḍuvasa (c. 500 B.C.) another large portion was submerged. A more extensive submergence took place in the reign of Devanampiya Tissa and his feudatory Kelaniya Tissa (c. 300 B.C.). Whether Ceylon was originally a part of the adjoining continent or not, analogy, reason and tradition, all point to the Indian peninsula as the country from whence it was first peopled and the resemblance between the Sings and Rajputs of the Continent and the Simhalese lends, adds if not any certainty, but at least some probability to the conjecture.28

Valuable Simhalese mss. are still preserved as heirlooms by some families of Ceylon. These documents are divided into two classes—Vittipot which are books of incidents and Kadaimpot the books of division or boundaries.²⁴ One such Vittipota states that 'from the very early times Lankā was colonized by people from all parts of India irrespective of race and country. They mixed freely and formed one nation. The first of those who occupied the island belonged to the race of Vararāja. Three descendants of the Royal House of Vararāja of the Asura race named Malayvat, Sumalin and Malin founded a city known as the kingdom of Lankā. And they brought three chiefs from various districts belonging to the kingdom of Vanga and settled them there with their attendants and followers.²⁵ Among them were those belonging to the race of Nara, and the men of those four

races made Lanka their home. Some of these races intermarried and they became a mixed race. Malayvat, Malin and Sumalin began later to harass the people. Then the people rose against them and drove them away from the country. The next invasion was that of Ravana, who became king of Lanka. He had ten crowns, was possessed of great knowledge and classified the Vedas into various divisions. He obtained great powers through his pious conduct and through the ceremonies and penances he practised. He and his people became adepts in all hidden sciences and astonished the world and became celebrated. He was able to subdue even the gods and terrorise them. During this time on account of the beauty of Sītā, wife of King Rāma, Rāvana was tempted to carry her away to Lanka, and on this account the great Rāma-Rāvana war took place. When Rāvana was defeated and slain, his brother Vibhīsana was crowned king of the island. The men of Lanka at this period were known as Raksasas and Yaksas. Their language was Andhra (Telugu). In course of time the last of their line, Jutindara, lived in a city known as Śrivatpura, from where he governed the people.' It will be seen that the story of the Vittipot is verily on the same line as narrated by Valmiki in his Rāmāyana.

In the Mahābhārata (sabhāparva, xxxiv, v. 12) there is a mention of Simhalā (the inhabitants of Simhala) together with Drāviḍa and others, who attended the Rājasūya sacrifice of Yuḍhiṣṭhira at Hastināpura. Again in vv. 35 and 36 of ch. lx the inhabitants of Simhala are described as coming to the sacrifice with presents. In the kiskindhā kāṇḍa (lviii, 33) of the Rāmāyaṇa Sampati, brother of Jaṭāyu, told the Vānaras that Laṅkā was situated on an island at a distance of one hundred yojanas from the Vindhyās (ito dvīpe samudrasya sampurne ŝatayojena).

At the time of the Rāmāyana, South India was practically terra incognita (land unknown) to the Aryans, except for stray and daring incursions by enterprising priests and princes. Rāma, in his trek to the southern sea, passed through unknown countries inhabited by strange people, some of whom were considered to be possessed by such sub-human characteristics as to be classed with the monkeys. It is true that he found in Lankā a very advanced civilization; but this was probably due to the fact that the Aryans had moved to Ceylon by sea via Saurāṣṭra even before they traversed Peninsular India. A similar explanation can possibly be found for the mention of cities like Kavaṭapuram (a seat of Sangam learning) in the Rāmāyaṇa but it is more probable that the great poet was using his contemporary geographical

knowledge (of the 8th or 7th century B.C.) while narrating the heroic deeds of Rāma, about 1300 years earlier. By the time of the *Mahābhārata* war, however, Aryan influence had spread very far down to the south. If we take the date of the war as c. 1400 B.C., the beginning of Aryan influence in South India, the following facts would go to support the assumption that the progress of the non-Aryan peoples into the deep South could not have been much later than 1000^{26} B.C.

In this connection mention may be made of 'Agastyam' a lost grammatical work attributed to Rsi Agastya. Curiously, Agastya is mentioned in the Rgueda (I. 179) as a 'fierce sage who characterised both varnas, i.e. Aryan and non-Aryan, thus perhaps indicating the Rsi's cosmopolitan and evangelical outlook. This well-known saint and coloniser is credited not only with spearheading Aryan cultural invasion of South India, but also with the setting up of numerous overseas settlements and trading centres, extending right up to the Indonesian Archipelago, which probably reached a few centuries prior to the Christian era. The fact that Agastya's beginnings have been lost in the haze of antiquity, would perhaps reinforce the view that the Aryans must have come to South India many centuries before the beginning of recorded history. On this surmise, the Aryan communities must have existed in North India some thousand years before the birth of Christ and their movement into the Deccan and further down must have taken place over a thousand years prior to the above date.

The town of Lankā or Lankapatanam is said to be a mountain on the south-east corner of Ceylon. It is described as Trikuṭa or three-peaked in the Rāmāyaṇa,²¹ and was the abode of Rāvaṇa.²¹ It is believed by some to be the present Mantotte in Ceylon, while others think it to be a town submerged.²¹ There is a place called Nikumbhilā, about 40 miles from Colombo, where Indrajit performed his sacrifice.³¹

There are very good reasons to suppose that Lankā and Ceylon are not identical islands. The $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana^{31}$ says that one must cross the river Tāmraparni and go to the south of the Mahendra range which abuts into the ocean and cross it to reach Lankā, or in other words, the island of Lankā, according to the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana$, was situated to the south of the Cardamum mountains which form the southern portion of the Mahendra range, while if Ceylon be the ancient Lankā, one is not required to cross the Tāmraparni river to the southern extremity of the Mahendra mountain in order to reach that island by the Adam's Bridge

(Setubandha Rāmeśvara). Varāhamihira, the celebrated astronomer, says that Ujjayinī and Laṅkā are situated on the same meridian while Ceylon lies far to the east of the meridian.³² Some of the works of the Pauranic times mention Laṅkā and Siṁhala (the corruption of which is Ceylon) as distinct islands.³³ On the other hand, the Mahāvaṁśa, the most ancient history of Ceylon composed in the 5th century A.D., distinctly mentions that the island of Laṅkā was called by Vijaya after his conquest and calls Dutthagamani and Parākrambāhu kings of Laṅkā or Siṁhala.³⁴ The Rājavalī also mentions the tradition of the war of Rāvaṇa in the island of Ceylon.³⁵ Dhammakitti, the author of the Dathavaṁśa, who lived in the 12th century A.D., in the reign of Parākrambāhu I, king of Ceylon, states that Siṁhala and Laṅkā are the same island. It is called Zeilan or Silan (Ceylon) by Marco Polo, who visited the land in the 13th century³⁶ A.D.

Book V (Sundarakānda) describes the wonderful island of Lanka, the town of residence, the magnificient palace of harems of Rāvana, and relates how Hanumāna dives Sītā news of her beloved Rāma, and at the same time finds out the strength of the enemy. The book may have received the title 'Sundarakanda' on account of the many poetical descriptions, 'the beautiful is the section' or because it contains even more fabulous stories than all other books. If the whole second half of the Rāmāyana is already a romantic epic, then this fifth book is very specially 'romantic', and for Indian taste the romantic is always beautiful. The section says that with a mighty leap, which causes the hill Mahendra to tremble in its depths and terrifies all the living beings on the hill, the monkey Hanumana rises into the air and flies across the ocean. After a flight of four days, on which he encounters various adventures and performs miracles, he finally reaches Lanka. From a hill he looks at the town; which seems to him almost impregnable. He makes himself as small as a cat, (according to another explanation 'as a horse-fly'). Hanumana can change his form at pleasure. After sunset, he penetrates into the town. He views the whole demon-city, the palace of Rāvaṇa and the wonderful chariot called Puspaka, on which the Rākṣasa is wont to drive through the air. He also penetrates into Ravana's harem, where he sees the powerful demon-prince reposing in the midst of his beautiful women.37

Rāvaṇa's palace in the Rāmāyaṇa is described as 'white like snow and elevated like many palms placed upon one another'. The mansions of the Rākṣasa nobles in Lankā are depicted as arranged like lotus-leaves. Rāvaṇa's chaitya-prāsāda in Aśoka-

vāṭikā was a round structure supported by a thousand pillars with stairs made of coral and pavements of varnished gold; its dazzling beauty, as it were, stole the vision of the on-looking; it was spotless and, on its height, seemed to touch the welkin. Hanumāna is represented as violently uprooting a huge pillar of the edifice, plated with gold and having a hundred borders, and whirling it in the air to terrify the Rākṣasas. 10

The fort of Lanka is described by Valmiki in the 3rd Canto of the Yuddhakānda thus: 'It was surrounded by a deep and wide moat filled with water, containing wild acquatic animals, followed by rampart walls. It had four giant gates in the four quarters, firmly established with huge and massive doors and fastened with iron bolts. Above them were stationed several kinds of powerful arms, stones and machines to stall an approaching foe. At the entrance, and probably mounted on the gate towers, were hundreds of steel sataghnis (canons), and turrets for hurling stones and missiles at the enemy (isupala-yantra). They were arranged and set in order by hands of heroic Raksasas. The city rampart (prākāra) was made impassable, its inside was decorated with costly adamant stones. The fort could be approached from outside by means of the four draw-bridges (sankramas) only. They were protected on both sides with huge destructive contrivances meant for hurling at invading forces down to into the moat. The northern draw-bridge was made specially large and strong, and contained platforms supported by pillars. There were no navigation routes round the island and so, it was inaccessible. The whole fort was full of arsenals, and garrisoned with horses and elephants and hundreds of brave Raksasas. The observation towers, called caityas, and occupied by guards of caityapālas, were probably situated on the crossways.41

The remarkable fortification (durga-karma vidhāna)⁴² of the citadel of Lankā was matched by the artistic planning of the civil town. The city covered an area of twenty yojanas in length and ten yojanas in width. It was built by Viśvakarmā for the habitation of the Rākṣaṣas.⁴³ Enclosed by a mighty wall⁴⁴ radiant like sunshine and exceedingly splendid with its grand gateways⁴⁵ Lankā, with its towering position on the summit of a hill⁴⁰ overlooking the sea and its myriads of majestic gold-gleaming palaces,⁴⁷ appeared to be built in the air⁴⁸ scraping the heavens. The with mosaic of precious gold, and had golden apartments.⁴⁹ The rampart walls had inside them vapras or daises, while at their

top were towers or attālikas.⁵¹ Some space was left between the ramparts and the moat, which was all filled with Vānaras during the seige of Lankā.⁵²

REFERENCES:

In this context it is interesting to note the view propounded by S. K. Chatterji in his The Rāmāyaṇa; its character, genesis, history, expansion and exodus: a resumé, p. 19: What is the source of the Rākṣasa story and the source of the Vānara one? Could it possibly be based on a dim recollection of fights and struggles among the pre-Aryan peoples in the Deccan and South India, who had spread into Ceylon also? The Rākṣasas were in possession of a high civilization, as the Rāmāyaṇa makes it abundantly clear, inspite of demoniac qualities and magical powers being attributed to them. The Rākṣasas are also identified with the Asuras, and it certainly seems very likely that the name Asura (generally meaning a demon or magic-working giant in earlier times in India), in the early part of the 1st millennium B.C. in India indicated in certain contexts the Assyrian people who had also invaded India.

The Rākṣasas of India were cruel and anti-Brahmanical, that is, anti-Aryan. But they were a highly advanced people nevertheless, rivalling and rising superior to the achievements of the Aryans in civilization, like the people of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa and other places in the pre-Aryan north India, Punjab, Sindh, Gujarat and Maharastra. The Rākṣasas had dealings with the Aryans, and there is much to show that there was quite an amount of give-and-take between the Rākṣasa culture and the Aryan culture, if we are to rely on the view that there is a human basis for the Rākṣasa civilization. So, could we think that the Rākṣasas stand for proto-Dravidians and even later Dravidians, as enemies of the Aryans?

Judging the different aspects of the Raksasas as described by

Vălmīki the above view has justification.

² RV. X.87. In another verse (X.84.1) the reading is 'Oh Soma, flow for İndra, Varuna and Vāyu; let gods assemble as Urukşiti, hearing the recitation of your mantras'. Another significant passage (X.118.8) reads: 'Oh Agni, blaze in the houses of Uru and destroy the Rākṣasas; the dwellers of Uru kindled you (Agni) with hymns'. Does this indicate that the Urukṣets set fire to the Rākṣasas' abodes or killed them by getting them heavily drunk with Soma.

The Dandakāranya was situated between the Vindhyā and the Saivāla mountain (Rāmāyaṇa, VII.81). According to the Uttara Rāmacarita (I.30) it was placed to the west of Janasthāna. It had also a jumble of watering places, hermitages, hills, streams, lakes etc. (ibid., ii.14). R. G. Bhandarkar held the view that it was the Maharastra. According to Pargiter, it comprised all the forests from Bundelkhand to Kṛṣṇa (JRAS, 1894, p. 242). The Mahābhārata (II.28.43 & II.83.28) limits it to the source of the Godavari. The Daiakumāracarita (p. 28, Nirnaya ed., 1951) informs us that there was a cave in the Dandakāranya. Cf. B. C. Law, ibid. p. 128.

The Pisacas are stigmatized as consumers of raw flesh: the Rakṣasas, it

is said, were also fond of human flesh. Grierson has demonstrated that Gilgit and Citral were the home of these people, who apparently practised cannibalism in the remote past. The Pashai Kafirs of Afghanistan are identified with this tribe by Grierson. Pargiter remarks. 'their subsequent characterisation as demons and evil spirits was later perversion of their real nature by the Puranic bards' (Dynastic History of Kali Age, p. 21). The language spoken by these people was known as Paisachi Prakrit, traces of which are often found in the Sanskrit literature, paricularly in the dramas.

In the danastuti of the Rgveda we get the whereabouts of the Parasus or Pārsvas. Here a Parasava is mentioned as the patron of Vatsa Kanna. The Vrsakapi hymn of the Rgveda refers to a Pārśa Mānavi, a lady cited as the daughter of Manu. Ludwig finds other references in the Rgveda, Kurusravana being declared to be defeated by a Paraśu, he also traces mention of Prthus and Parsus (i.e. Parthians and Persians)

in one other hymn.

Pāṇini writing about warrior republics (Ayudhajivī Samghas) mentions the Parasas as a fighting Aryan tribe with elected chieftains. Gandhāra (Kandāhār, Pānīni's homeland) and Pārśa appear as neighbouring provinces in the Behistun inscription of Darius the Great (521-486 B.C.). The Rgveda (VI.27) mentions Hariyupiya as the name of a town at which Indra (Daivic Aryans) killed the grandsons of Varasika. It has been suggested that the town is none other than modern Harappa, and that the Veda probably refers to a great battle there between Daivic and Asuric Aryans following which the town was abandoned by the Asuras (i.e. Parasikas), who left in a body for foreign lands. Did the migration of the Rākṣasas take place in a similar way? If this surmise is based on any fact, the battle in and around Harappa must have taken place about 4000 B.C. Baudhāyana (c. 700 B.C.) mentions the Sparasus as a western people. Kālidāsa, in his Raghuvamsa, carries the victorious Raghu to the country of the Parasikas, 'whose maidens were of overwhelming beauty and whose valiant fighters were bearded and moustachioed.

In actuality the laws of war were seldom followed in past, as also in the present. In modern days the laws are all the more violated. In this context, reference may be made to the 5th canto of Michael Madhusudan Dutt's Meghnādvadh Kāvya:

Indrajit-'nirastra je ari nahe rathikul prathā, āghātite tāri e vidhi, he virvar, avidita nahe; kṣatra tumi, taba kāchhe ki ār kahiba.

Lakşman— 'ānāy mājhāre bāghe pāyile kabhu chhāre re kirāt tāre. badhiba ekhani, abodh temati tore; . .

Indrajit-'Lakşman. nirlajja tui. kşatriya samāje rodhibe sravanpath ghṛṇāy śunile nām tor rathivṛnda. taskar jemati, paśili e grhe tui.

'The custom of the warrior clan is not to hurt an enemy who is without arms. You being a Kşatriya know it perfectly. What more I should say to you-

- Lakṣmaṇ— 'When the hunter gets his game into a trap he does not let it go. I will also kill you at once, you fool.
- Indrajit— 'Laksman, you are indeed shameless. By your action the Ksatriya society will not hear you out of hate; the warriors will fie on you, who have entered this house like a thief.
- See Spellman, Political History of Ancient India, p. 159; Dharma Sastras, VI.19.29.40; 19.18-19,31; 41.66. See also Mahton, B. N., The Theory of Government in the Rāmāyana (MS), Ch. IX. In this connection it may be noted that in ancient days two kinds of conflict were envisaged, the Dharmayuddha and Kūtayuddha. In the Aryan encounter with the Rāksasas both these modes were followed. As a matter of fact, the nomenclature of the general encounter is Dharmayuddha, but on many occasions the other mode was followed. The former adhered to the ethics of the military profession, while the latter did not; the former believed in a fair and open fight (prakāśayuddha), while the latter would permit of subterfuges and deceit (mantrayuddha). In Dharmayuddha the preliminaries of the fight were settled beforehand by the principal combatants. In Kūtayuddha, the reverse was the case, and surprise and camouflage, aided by witchcraft, was the sine qua non of success. In Vedic literature, there is a plenty of evidence of Kūtayuddha practices, not always confined to the Asuras and Rākṣasas, though the latter were often charged in the hymns, with breaking the moral code, idealised by the Deva worshippers. The same breaking can be seen in the great battles, both of the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata. See also Kalyanaraman, A., Aryatarangini: The Saga of the Indo-Aryans, pp. 100, 125 & 141.
- 8 Rāmāyana, IV.2.6.23; 19.10; V.33-6.60.
- The Brahmanas, who were for three generations had failed to recite the Gayatri mantra, became Vratyas. The Atharvaveda (XV.1) gives some lively pictures of vagabond Vrātyas 'travelling in a bullock cart with concubines and musicians, messengers and footmen and professing Saivite magic with fluency'. It is mentioned in the Rgveda (V.12) that Brbu was the chief of the Panis, but other names such as Dhuni, Varchin, Sambara etc., are mentioned as leaders of the community, which was considered by the rsis to be mean-minded, given to ill-treating their women-folk, and to cattle-lifting. The Samhitas look down upon the Panis as niggards and wolves. In one passage, they are described as 'bekanatas' (commented on in the Vedic Index) or usurers; in another, they are dubbed with the Dasyus, the hereditary enemy of the Aryan race. In two passages they appear as Dasas (the Dahae of the Greeks), as Aryan clan outside the pale of orthodoxy. Roth derives the word 'Pani' from 'pan' to barter, and thinks that the 'unsavoury reputation of the community was due to its notorious propensity to drive hard bargains in trade.'
- Rgveda, V.22. The words Panik or Vanik, Panya or Vipani, found in Sanskrit suggest that the Panis were merchants par excellence in the Rgvedic age. The Panis have been variously identified with an aboriginal non-Aryan people; with Babylonians (on the strength of the word Bekanata) with Parnians, the Dahae and other Iranian tribes and with

non-Aryan caravan traders. They might have been the Aryan seatraders who spread the Aryan culture to the West.

- "The folk settled in the Kuccha-Kathiawad area in that age might have been the people known to the Mahābhārata as the Abhīras, the ancestors of modern Ahirs (?). It is stated in the great epic that Arjuna, escorting the Yadava women out of that region after the horrible family tragedy of fraternal massacres, was attacked by the Abhiras, who must have retired to the hilly region of the Aravalli hills on the Yadavas occupying the country and lying in wait for their opportunity.
- 12 Cf. Vijayasimha (of Bengal)'s sea-adventurers reaching Simhaladvipa (Ceylon).
- ¹⁸Col. Tod in his Annals of Rajāsthān, introduction, suggests that the Pandyans were descended of Pandu, King of Hastinapura.
- "In the Vedic literature the term 'yaksa' does not occur as the name of a class of superhuman beings and Kuvera Vaiśravana, the king of the yaksas according to the Buddhist and post-Vedic Brahmanic literature, is the king of the yaksas. He was the step-brother of Ravana and once ruler of Lanka. In the Pali texts not only is a class of superhuman beings called yaksas, the term is also used generically for a divine being and also applied to such gods as Indra, Visnu, Prajapati and to Buddha himself. Ref. R. P. Chanda, Beginnings of Art in Eastern India, p. 7.
- ¹⁵ De, S. C., Historicity of Ramayana and the Indo-Aryan Society in India and Ceylon, pp. 17-31.
- ¹⁶ Maheśvarakhanda, Kumārīkhanda, chh. xxi, vv. pp. 219-221

Mahisagarajalasya Tarakah sa puram bali/ yojanadvādasayamam tāmrāprākārasobhita// prasadairbahubhihkīrņe divyascaryyopasobhitam/ yatra sadvastrayonaiva jiryyante canisam pure/ gitaghosascajyaghosobhuanti visyastvati//

The fight between Skanda Kārttikeya or Kumāra and the demon Taraka and the final overthrow of the latter are described graphically in ch. 30 of Kedārakhaņḍa, Maheśvarakhaṇḍa of Skandapurāṇa.

Identified by some with Singur near Tarakesvara in the district of

Hooghly in Bengal.

In the opening section of the Mahavamsa (c. 5th or 6th century A.D.) there is the story of birth (his grandmother being married to a lion: simha) and arrival of Vijaya in Ceylon. Vijaya was the eldest of the sixteen pair of twins and he was so evil that he had to be exiled. He travelled at first to Western India and finally arrived in Ceylon with 700 attendants on the same day as the Buddha's death (c. 543 B.C.). He eventually subdued the demons which inhabited the island, sent to India for wives for himself and his followers and became the virtuous king of Ceylon.

The grographical area of the story is very wide, starting with eastern India, going to western India, whence Vijaya takes ship and sails for Ceylon. This may well have been the normal route taken by people travelling south. The overland route certainly went via

western India.

Besides Vijaya the Mahavaméa calls Dutagamani and Parākrambāhu kings of Lankā or Simhala. Dhammakitti, the author of the Dathavaméa, who lived in the 12th century A.D. stated that Simhala and Lankā were identical.

In this connection it is interesting to note the view of R. P. Chanda about the close affinity lying between the Bengali language and the ancient cave dialect of Ceylon. According to him 'the cave dialect of Ceylon appears to lie in direct line of ancestry of the Bengali language and indicates that the language of Bengal separated from the Māgadhi before the 2nd century B.C.' See R. P. Chanda's article 'Early Indian Seamen' in Sir Asutosh Mukherjie Silver Jubilec Volumes, Vol. III,

pt. 1, 1922, pp. 114-116.

This intimate connection between the earliest known phases of the Simhalese language and the Bengali indicates that the story of the colonisation of Ceylon by a band of Bengali adventurers is not devoid of historical basis. The reference in the Mahavamia (vii. 40-41) is also noteworthy. It states that 'when the followers of Vijaya landed from their ship they sat down wearied, resting their hands upon the ground and as their hands were reddened by touching the dust of the red earth, that region and also the island were (named) Tambapanni'. Vijay is also said to have founded a city called Tāmbapanni (vii, 39), that is to say, there was an ancient city in Ceylon called Tāmbapanni.

18 The matter has been dealt elsewhere.

Pavanvitarne on 'Pre-Buddhistic religious beliefs in Ceylon' at the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society on November 2, 1929 wherein the author has said 'I do'nt believe that the island of Ceylon is the same as Lankā, which perhaps is a mythical island which never existed; though he somewhat inconsistently referred to Vaiśravana (Dhaneśvara or Kuvera) and Vibhīṣaṇa at least as Rāvaṇa's brother and successor to the kingdom of Lankā as mentioned first in the Rāmāyaṇa.

Another tradition in Ceylon says that a considerable portion of Lankā was submerged in ancient times. The statements of the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa and Ceylon tradition may be rendered consistent, even if Lankā was called Simhala before Vijayasimha's conquest, by our supposing (a) that Simhala was the eastern province of Lankā, (b) that Lankā extended more than 300 miles towards the west from the western extremity of the present Ceylon, (c) that a natural cataclysm transformed this western portion into an island after Rāvaṇa's death and this island was called Lankā and that the eastern portion was called Simhala, and (d) that later on another natural disturbance brought about the complete submergence of Lankā or the western portion.

²⁰ Ceylon was not visited by the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen-tsang on account of political disturbances. In the 7th century A.D. Ceylon was known by the name of Seng-kia-lo, or Sinhala, which was said to be derived from the lion-descended Simhala, whose son Vijay is said to have conquered the island on the very day of the Buddha's mahāparinirvāṇa i.e. B.C. 543. Its original name was Pao-chu or Isle of Gems, in Sanskrit Ratna-dvipa. Its existence was first made known to the European world by the expedition of Alexander, under the name of Taprobane. The popular Pāli form is Tāmba-panni or red-handed in

allusion to the 'red palms of the hands of Vijaya's sick companions. who on landing from their vessel, touched the red ground with their hands. The true form would appear to be Tamba-panni or red-leaved, from the Sanskrit Tamra-parni. See Turnour, Mahawanso, p. 50. Lassen gives Tambra-pani or the great pond or pond covered with the red lotus.

In later times it was known to the Western world as Simundu, or Palai-Simudu, which Lassen thinks may have been derived from Pali-Simanta or 'head of the holy land'. Ptolemy calls the island Salike which appears to be only a sailor's corrupt form of Sinhalaka or Sihalaka shortened to Salika. Ammianus calls it Serendikus, which is the same as the Sieladiba of Kosmos, both being derived from Sihaladipa. Abu Rahim gives the form of Singaldib or Sirindib which is the Serendib of the Europeans. From the same source came the Arabic Zilan and our own Ceylon. Amongst the Hindus the most familiar name is Lagka-dwipa, which is mentioned in the Mahavamsa under the Pali form of Lanka-dvipa.

21 In the Ceylon Times dated 22.4.78 S. Nihal Singh writes that Buonavista at Galle is said to be the rock on which the herbes brought by Hanumana from the Himalayas for being administered to wounded soldiers are still growing and that the practisers of the Ayurvedic system of medicine derive many of their potent drugs from the medicinal plants of the place.

The last battle of the Rama-Ravana war according to the same authority is said to have been fought near Welinada and Hakgala in the heart of the Uva Downs. Hakgala is said to have been a corruption of Hankhgola, which has been derived from Sankhgola or the Conchrock from which Ravana's signallers apprised Ravana's headquarters of

the movements of the enemy.

According to the same writer the black and arid tract between Elk plains (near Nuaara Eliya) and Welimada is said to be the part of Lankā burnt by the Vānara army in anger on account of Rāvaṇa's and Indrajit's beheading the life-like effigies of Rāma and Sītā. A paddyfield not far from the Devurunwela Vihāra between Welimada and Hakgala according to Singh is said to be the place where Ravana fell in his fight with Rama. Vibhisana according to the same author is said to have been crowned at Vidurapulla (battlefield) near Welimada. Sītā is said by Singh to have been taken after Ravana's death in a procession along the highway between Hakgala and Welimada. The place where Sītā threw herself into fire, when her purity was suspected by her husband, is called Divrunwela. Singh writes that Siva (Munnanātheśvara) and his consort are said to have been worshipped by Rāma at a place near Chilaw in the west of Ceylon on his way home from Lanka. Koneśvara (Śiva), who has his temple near Trincomalce is said to have been worshipped by Ravana's mother, and six miles from this place is Ravana's well or hot spring where he is said to have performed the obsequies of his mother.

The above detail description of places is undoubtedly interesting

but it is subject to further study.

²² Arunachalam, Sketches of Ceylon History, pp. 22 ff. See also ref. of Varahamihira.

²⁸ Donald Obeysekere, ibid, pp. 39-40.

- 24 de Silva, W. A., Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1972.
- 25 Cf. Vijavasimha's expedition discussed elsewhere.
- 26 Recent archaeological investigations conducted at the early Chola capital of Uraiyur by the Madras University, under the guidance of Dr. T. V. Mahalingam, have unearthed unmistakable evidence of Aryan influence (like characteristic North-Indian pottery and inscriptions) in Brahmi script attributable to the 2nd or 3rd century B.C.

In this context the probable date of Rāma is interesting to note. If Manu lived about 3100 B.C., Rāma (5th in descent from Manu) would have reigned in c. 3000 B.C. Māndhātri who came twenty generations later would have lived about 2700 B.C. The period of Arjuna Kārtavīrya and Paraśurāma can be placed 300 years further down the stream of time. Rāma flourished 65 generations after Manu and his date will therefore be not far from 2000 B.C. (3150-65x 18). King Sudās, mentioned in the Purāņas (wrongly identified) with the Sudās Tritsu of the Rgveda ruled three generations after Rāma, according to the Puranas.

- 27 Sundarakānda, ch. 1.
- 28 Lankākānda, ch. 125.
- Muttu Coomaraswamy, Dathavamsa, p. 97.
- 30 Buddhist Text Society Journal, vol. iii, pt. 1, appendix.
- at Kiskindhākānda, ch. 41.
- 32 Varāhamihira, Pañca Siddhānta, chs. xiii and xiv: The people of Lankā; and imaginary island lying on the equator, see the Pole Star (Dhruva) on the horizon; those on Meru, in the zenith. What is sunrise in Lankā is sunset in Siddhapura, midday in Yamakoti and midnight in Romaka country. The place names are uncertain. Romaka country may be Rome, which is roughly 54 degrees to the west of Ujjayini and can account for a difference of about 44 hours in time. Varāhamihira places Romaka deśa to the west of Yavanapura and Alexandria. Varāhamihira also mentions Ketumālā at a very distant antipodal country. Can this be Gautemala in Central America? In Vedic times, the Hindukush region was named Ketumālā-a name which could have been carried to the New World by the Aryans.
- 33 Brhatsamhitā, ch. 14 and Devipurāņa, chs. 52 & 46.
- 34 Geiger, Mahāvamsa, chs. 7 & 31.
- 35 Upham, Rājāvali, pt. 1.
- 34 Wright, Marco Polo, intro.; Col. Yule, Travels of Marco Polo, vol. ii, p. 254 note.
- ³⁷ Sundarakānda, 5.9-11, 5.47ffff. The mighty seraglio scene is described vividly in the style of ornate poetry, and forcibly recalls the description in the Buddha legend, where Prince Siddhartha, surrounded by his wife and female companions, awakens at the hour of midnight, and is seized with disgust at sensual pleasure. The similarity of the situation and of the description in Asvaghoşa's Buddhacharita. E. B. Cowell rightly remarks in the preface to his edition of the Buddhacharita that this scene forms an essential part of the Buddha legend, while in the Rāmāyaņa it is only an entirely unnecessary embellishment.

Of course, we must not ascribe the piece to Vālmīki himself, but the imitation must be ascribed to later interpolator. See Winternitz, History of Sanskrit Literature, vol. i, pp. 490ff.

- 28 Op. Cit., 4.7.
- 20 Op. Cit., 15-16.
- " Op. Cit., 17-18.
- 11 Rāmāyaņa, V.43.13.
- 42 Ibid., V.53.14.
- 43 Ibid., V.39.20.
- "Ibid., IV.58.20; V.2.22; VI.24.9.
- 45 Ibid., VI.38.10.
- 4 Ibid., VI.38.10.
- 47 Ibid., VI.24.9.
- 48 Ibid., IV.58.22.
- 4º Ibid., VI.38.10.
- 50 Ibid., VI.48.10.
- 81 Ibid., V.2.21.
- 52 Ibid., V.2.33.
- 11 Ibid., VI.41.97; See also The Statesman, Calcutta, the 12th February, 1980: The noted archaeologist H. D. Sankalia claims that Ravana's Lanka was located at Sonepur, situated in the dense forest near Bastar, on the bank of the Mahanadi in Orissa. Sankalia, who had long held the view that Lanka, as described in the Ramayana, was not the former Ceylon, as was traditionally believed, said that preliminary examination of pottery excavated in Sonepur town, proved that Ravana had ruled in this region. Historical and iconographical evidence also showed that the town, nearly one km. in length and half km. in breadth, was Ravana's Lanka. It is a hillock on the bank of the river, near the confluence of the Mahanadi, about 250 km. from Jagadalpur in Bastar, river-bed being about 1.5 km. wide. Sankalia had put forth the view that Rama had never crossed the Narmada to enter the southern parts of India for the war with Ravana in what was formerly Ceylon, and that Lanka was located in Bastar. Explaining the recent findings, he said that the Gond tribals in the region still worshipped Ravana while another tribe Savari, which could be desendants of Sabarī described in the epic, worshipped Rāma. Some tribals still burnt effigies of Hanumana as part fo the rituals. There are various traditions associated with the Ramayana in the tribal zone while some places were still known as Lakka or Lanka. Sankalia said the word Lanka' did not have an Aryan or Dravidian origin. The name of the Sonepur site 'Asuracal' was also associated with Ravana, who was the king of the Asuras. The archaeologist said that the pottery which was initially examined dated back to 2000 B.C. and suggested that detailed study be undertaken around the site to trace archaeological and geographical identification of places which were mentioned in the Rāmāyaņa. He ruled out the theory that Lanka was located near Jabalpur as was propounded by Parameshwaih. Sankalia had rejected this theory after

he visited the banks of the Narmada to gather evidence. He had not found an evidence to suggest habitation in the area belonging to the Rāmāyaṇa period. He could not find the Sāl tree as mentioned in the epic. He had concluded that Rāma might have travelled into Daṇḍakāraṇya crossing the source of the Narmada at Amarakaṇṭaka and then reached the area now known as Bastar.

A leading authority on the aborigines of Central India, Hira Lal, saw in the story of the Rāmāyana an account of Kośala Aryans expanding towards Dakṣina Kośala. He showed the distances and directions of location at Mount Amarakanṭaka. He further showed that the term 'Lankā' meant gondi, which means an island as well as a hill-top, and godāri a river. According to him the sea near Lankā was the reservoir formed by the river Son at the base of Amarakanṭaka and that the Conds had a tradition that they were descendants of Rāvaṇa and the Vānaras were the Oraons or Vraons. (Hira Lal, Avadhi-Hindi-Prant men Rama-Ravana Yuddha: 'Rama-Ravana war in the Avadhi-Hindi region', Lexicon Commemoration Volume, Varanasi, 1929, pp. 15ff.

D. C. Sircar referring to the Saktisangama Tantra says that this Simhala cannot be identified with Ceylon. (bk. III, ch. 7, v. 49): reference Sircar, Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India, 1960, p. 76: Marudeśatpūrvabhāge Kāmadrerdakṣine Sive/Simhalākhyo mahadeśaḥ sarvadeśottamotamaḥ// The great country called Simhala, the best of all countries, is placed to the east of Marudeśa and to the south of the Kāmādri. It is evidently in the Punjab-Rajasthan region and reminds us of the kingdom of Simhapura mentioned by Hiuen-tsang. The capital of this kingdom has been identified with Khetas or Katas in the Jhelum district, which is, next to Jvalāmukhī, the most frequented place of pilgrimage in the Punjab. Tantric literature locates Sambhala (probably Simhala) and Lankāpuri in the Swat-Kashmir region.

THE VĀNARAS

The Vanaras or monkeys were forest dwellers who belonged to a community of south Indian aborigines. They were called Vanaras because of strange appearance and timidity. They are sometimes described as having tails, but these were probably worn as emblems or as ornaments,1 which would account for the fact that Hanumana did not feel pain when his tail was set on fire in Lanka. S. Ramdas mentions a class of 'tailed' aborigines among the Sabaras of Vizagapatnam.2 They had a clan system, each clan having its own chieftain, and all of them subject to the tribal chief. When properly led, they were formidable fighters. In the Vālmīki Rāmāyana the leader of the Vānaras was Sugrīva whose commander was Hanumana. The Vanaras are said to have helped Rama find Sītā, as well as helping him in his fight against Rāvaņa.

In this context a question might arise in our mind. Under the designation of monkeys which play so important a part in the Rāmāyana, have we a class of aborigines who allied themselves to the Aryans and embraced their form of religious worship; or are they, as well as the Rāksasas, merely imaginary (rude)

poetical creations.

The monkeys are described as living in a cavern³ which Laksmana is represented as entering to convey a message of remonstrance to Sugrīva for his tardiness in aiding Rāma. The cavern is a cave only in name; as in the usual style of later Indian poetry it is depicted or filled with trees, flowery thickets, palaces, a mountain stream, etc. This feature of monkey-life (their occupation of a cavern) may be either purely poetical and intended to be in keeping with their other characteristics, or it may have reference to the rude habitation of the aboriginal inhabitants of the southern forests.

It is probable that the extravagant descriptions of the gigantic and sylvan inhabitants of the Deccan should have originated in some actual and hostile contact with the savages who occupied the then uncleaned forests of that region; then they should be the simple offspring of the poet's imagination. Or, the woodland inhabitants of India, south of the Vindhya range, are called in the Rāmāyana 'monkeys' in contempt because of their savage condition, and also perhaps because they were little known at that time.4 In the same way Homer related fabulous stories about the races who, in his age, were known to the Greeks. The occupants of the Deccan differed from Sanskrit-speaking Indians in origin, worship and language. The Vanaras or monkeys, though they differed from the Aryans in race, language, colour and features, must have shown a disposition to receive the Aryan civilization since they entered into league with Rāma, and joined in his expedition against the black tribes of further south. The greater part of the tribes south of the Vindhya also submitted to the institution of the aryans; but towards the extremity of the peninsula and in Ceylon, there was a ferocious black race, opposed to the Aryan worship. To this race the Aryans applied the name of Rākṣasas, an appellation which, in the Veda, is assigned to hostile, savage, and hated beings. It is against this race that the expedition of Rāma, celebrated in the Rāmāyana, was directed.5

Vālmīki in his Rāmāyana describes the Rākṣasas as a class different from men and gives the Vānaras monkey faces and tails. The Vānaras are called Kāmarūpīs i.e. with forms assumable at will just like the Rākṣasas. They are also called Māyāvids i.e. knowers of māyā (illusion). Besides these suprahuman qualities, the Vānaras are reputed to be knowers of policy and possession of wisdom and to be acquainted with asthras i.e. spiritual weapons. In the Kiskindhyākānḍa¹ they are described as wearing garlands and clothes. Throughout we find that they are capable of

moving through earth, water and air.

The episodes of the friendship plighted by Sugrīva and Rāma before the god of fire shows that the Vānaras knew the use of fire and had human virtues. They were learned in Sanskrit. Hanumāna was specially noted for his Vedic lore and his knowledge of grammar. Rāma praises his learning.⁸. In the Sundarakānda Hanumāna did not speak in Sanskrit to Sītā lest she should take him to be Rāvaṇa in disguise and that he spoke in the Prakrit dialect known to her. In the Uttarakāṇḍa it is stated that Hanumāna learnt the science of grammar (vyākaraṇa) from the sun-god⁹ and that he knew nine vyākaraṇas and all the sacred lore.¹⁰ He was

also an expert in the medical science and knew precious herbs. In the *Uttarakānḍa*¹¹ we are told about his supreme devotion to God.

The Vānaras were fond of wine (madhu and mairaya). They used to dress themselves. When Bāli and Sugrīva met in fight they were clad in garments.¹² They had an enlightened system of government. They had a sense of right and wrong. Even today Bāli's criticism of Rāma is a masterpiece of moral argument. They are described as making gifts to Brāhmaṇas.¹³ Hanumāna prays to all the Aryan gods before he begins his search for Sītā.

It is thus clear that the Vānaras must have been an Aryan colony which settled down in South India and were cut off from their brothers who were living in North India. They were in the heart and centre of Aryan culture and were achieving remarkable progress. Such progress was due to the fact that they lived in fertile lowlands and had a prosperous environment and to the further fact that they lived in large numbers which was itself a factor stimulating progress by their means of approval and criticism. But the early Aryan emigrants to the central uplands and forest tracts had neither of these advantages. Their country was only sparsely inhabited and was not the seat of expanding progress and growing refinement.¹⁴

About the capital of the Vānaras a detail account can be found in the Rāmāyaṇa. Kiskindhyā, 15 the Vanāra capital, was a mahāpuri, situated in a mountanous region (girisañkaṭa: 4.31.16) in the vicinity of Mount Praśravaṇa (4.27.26). It was situated in a cave (giri gahvara: 4.26.41) amidst charming surroundings. The approaches to the city lay through a dense forest, abounding in hills and dales, rills and caverns infested with wild beasts (4.13.5-12). Suka, Rāvaṇa's spy, described Kiskindhyā as clad in dense forest which was availed of by Rāma and his companions as a vantage ground to shoot, unseen, at Bāli (4.22.14; 14.1). Dundubhi, before his encounter with Bāli, had felled some of the trees that grew around it (4.11.27).

The defence arrangement, identical with those of other cities, did not mar the architectural beauty of the city, which was well-provided with gardens (4.27.16), abundant gems, heavenly, beautiful, full of charming palaces and mansions, decorated with precious stones, abloom with all sorts of trees, and crowded with Vānaras, descently clad and wearing unfading garlands, who could assume various forms at will (4.33.4-6). On the highway was situated the srongly mansions of the principal Vānara chiefs (4.33.12). The royal palace was girt round with a marble-white

rocky rampart difficult to approach (4.33.14). The city was inhabited by stout people and was fragrant with sandal-wood smell, and mixed aroma of aguru, lotuses (4.33.7), honey and wine. It was a city of incomparable beauty (atulaprabhā: 4.11.21).

REFERENCES:

Some scholars hold the view that the people worshipped a monkey as their family deity and consequently they were known as Vānaras. The question of the tail of the Vānaras described in the Rāmāyana may present some difficulty unless it is taken in a figurative sense referring to the loincloth hanging down at the back. Some anthropologists are of the opinion that some aboriginal tribes had a genuine tail.

¹ Vyas, S. N., India in the Rāmāyana Age, p. 58.

² See 'Aboriginal Tribes in the Rāmāyaṇa' in Man in India, vol. V, pp. 46ff. The Vānaras represent a tribe with monkey-like faces. Cf. the term 'vānarasyaḥ' (name of a tribe): Mahābhārata, VI.10.43. Sorensen in his Index Mahābhārata registers vānaram (?) vānaraḥ, a people, read by Kumbhakarna ed. Mss in the Critical Ed. (Mahābhārata, VI.60.43).

³ See Vyas, S. N., op. cit. p. 59.

^{&#}x27;Gorresio in his note to vol. VI, pp. 401-02.

Gorresio's preface to the last volume.

Rāmāyaņa, Bālakānda, 16.3 & 4.

^{&#}x27;Ibid., 1.23.6 .: divyamālyambaradhareh.

⁸ Ibid., 3.29-34.

⁹ Ibid., 36.5.46.

¹⁰ Ibid., 36.47,48.

¹¹ Ibid., 50.15-20.

¹² Ibid., V.12.5; 16.5.

¹⁸ Ibid., V.4.5.

¹⁴ Ladd, Origin of Campa, Java and Tibet, p. 89.

Mahābhārata, III.264;15: The Purāṇas read (Brahma, III.7.287; Matsya, XII.46). But the form andhā is not unknown. Cf. Dey, Geography. Dictionary. Kiskindhā is a small hamlet situated on the northern bank of the river Tungabhadra near Anagandi, about 60 miles to the north of Bellary. About two miles to the south-west of Kiskindhā is the Pampa Lake, and to the north-west of Pampa is the Anjana hill where Hanumāna was born.

III ·

THE ARYAS

The Aryan society in India as depicted in the Rāmāyaṇa must have attained a high degree of civilization more than three thousand years ago and the continuity of it in its essentials (cf. marriage and funeral rites, moral and religious ideas and sentiments etc.) upto the present day is a conclusive proof of its existence, for otherwise it could not have withstood so successfully the shocks of numerous invasions and conquests, both political and cultural from without and its clash with Buddhists and other hostile philosophical and religious systems within.¹

In its historical setting, the Rāmāyana represents the most notable fact during the period under review, viz. the expansion of Aryan culture over Deccan and South India. It plainly hints at the methods employed by the conquerors, namely, the missionary enterprises backed by military power, and the setting up on one non-Aryan tribe against another. It also pays an indirect tribute to the high state of material and moral culture of the non-Aryans.²

The strength and excellence of the Aryan culture lay in their domestic virtues. The affectionate faithfulness of the brothers, the undying love of Rāma's consort, Sītā, the truthfulness and righteousness of Rāma, the magnanimity towards the enemies are some of the salient traits of the Aryans. There is also the sternness of Aryan character and its spirit of sacrifice, as reflected in the characters of Daśaratha and his three sons Rāma, Bharata and Lakṣmaṇa. Among the other virtues of the Aryans must be counted a supreme regard for truth, a spirit of manly enterprise which nothing could daunt, and a perseverance and dogged obstinacy which carried everything before it. Everyone of these features is emphasized in the successful expedition of Rāma against enormous odds. There can hardly be a nobler and more

stimulating example than of the helpless Rāma, rising above the most terrible calamity that can befall an honorable man and fighting his way to a successful issue by dint of his stubborn will, energy and prowess. The high ideals of the Aryans were embodied in Rāma, a dutiful son, the affectionate brother, the loving husband, the stern relentless hero, an ideal king who placed the welfare of his State above the most cherished personal feelings—a strange combination of the grace of flowers and the fury of thunders (vajrādapi kaṭhora and kusumādapi komala³).

The weak spots of Aryan life did not lose sight of the poet. Kings like Daśaratha were weak for feminine grace and were polygamous. And because of this fatal flaw in his character Daśaratha brought all the disasters upon himself and his kingdom. Out of these germs developed the palace intrigues and the license of the court, which

undermined the virility of political life in ancient India.

The general contention is that in the Rāmāyana, that is the movement (ayana) of Rāma, the Aryan hero, has been presented a well-knit story by the sage-poet Vālmīki of the expansion of the Aryans towards the South. As to the expansion of the Aryan culture to the Deccan and the South India, the evidence of Pāṇini (c. 6th century B.C.) and Kātyāyana (c. 4th century B.C.) Vārtikas on Pāṇini, seems to be fairly conclusive. The only country which Pānini has mentioned in the Deccan, south of the Narmada, is Asmaka, whereas Kātyāyana refers to the Pāndya, Cola and Kerāla. This shows that the Aryans came into contact with these South Indian peoples during the time between the 6th and 4th century B.C., the time intervening between Pāṇini and Kātyāyana. But the Puranas and the Ramayana would make us believe that the whole of South India, including Ceylon, was colonized by the Aryans, or brought under the sphere of influence by the time of Rāma, of course if Rāma did really exist and was not a mere product of Vālmīki's imagination.

Whatever accounts of kings and dynasties are available in the Purāṇas and the Epics, the location of the participation cannot perhaps be accepted with certainty. It is seen that many of the royal dynasties as referred to in the traditional account did not belong to any Aryan fold. On the contrary, we find that powerful kingdoms were already in existence in the country prior to the advent of the Aryans. But such a theory definitely goes against the traditional account which represents all ruling families as descended from the common ancestor Manu. Some scholars think that the kings who are mentioned in the traditional accounts belonged to three different stocks or races of which the Ailas were

the Aryans, the Saudumnya stock; the Mundā race and its branch the Mon-Khmers belonged to the east and from the Mānava stock i.e. the remaining descendants of Manu, the Dravidians emerged.⁵ Traditional history associates the Ailas or the Lunar dynasty with the Himalayas.⁶ Pargiter interprets the traditional accounts as stating that the Aryans came into India from the Himalayan region. But according to him the Aryans are confined not only to the Ailas, but also to other stocks, and there is absolutely no differentiation between the Solar and the Lunar dynasties as regards status and dignity.⁷

The homeland of the Aryans, as depicted in the Rāmāyaṇa was Ayodhyā. The kingdom of Ayodhyā rose to a very great prominence under Yuvanāsa II, and specially his son Māndhātā. The latter was a famous king, a Samrāṭ (emperor) and extended his sway very widely. He overran the Paurava and Kānyakubja kingdoms, and defeated the Druhyus. The Druhyu king Gandhāra retired to the North-west, and had his name to the Gandhāra country. It is also probable that Māndhātā or his sons carried their arms south to the river Narmada. The supremacy of Ayodhyā soon waned, and the Haihayas became the dominant power.

Ayodhyā again rose to prominence under Sagara's great grandson Bhagiratha, and the latter's successors. But after the reign of Kalamashapāda, who killed the sons of his priest Vasistha troublesome period ensued, and the kingdom was divided among two rival lines. The internal dissensions continued for six or seven generations, until Dilip II re-established the single monarchy. The kingdom of Ayodhya, which now acquired the name of Kośala, rose to prominence under Dilip II and his successors Raghu, Aja, Daśaratha and Rāma. After them Ayodhyā ceased to play any prominent part in history. In this context it is interesting to note the description of Ayodhyā by Vālmīki. He says, 'Ayodhyā' was 48 miles in circuit. It was filled with merchants, beautified by gardens, ornamented with stately gateways, crowded with chariots, elephants and horses, and with ambassadors from foreign lands. Embellished with palaces, with high domes like mountain-tops, and dwellings of great height, resounding with the beautiful music of the tabor, harp and the flute, surmounted by an impassable moat, guarded by archers. There were no atheists and men loved their wives; the women were chaste and obedient, endowed with beauty, wit, sweetness and industry, wearing costly ornaments and bright apparel. The city was governed by eight councillors, (two of them were priests,

learned in the law and the rest from the common folk) impartially awarding punishment, even to their sons and never oppressing

even an enemy.'

In the Rāmāyana culture, which was predominantly the culture of the Aryans, we come across a number of Vedic practices. Sacrifice (vaiña of the Vedic people, vasna of the Iranians) was common during the Rāmāyana age. In the Sundarakānda (4.8) Rāma is introduced by Laksmana to Hanumāna as the son of Daśaratha, who performed sacrifices like Agnistoma diving many large guerdon. Another piece of evidence of adherence to Vedic practices like sacrifice and oblation is provided by Rāma's worship of Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) on the eye of his projected anointment and his ritual at inauguration of his hermitage on Citrakūta mountain, was ready for occupation, Rāma offered the purificatory and benedictory rite, known as 'Vāstudanti' (purification of the House). He asked Laksmana to hunt a black antelope and to roast it in fire. On Laksmana having roasted the black antelope, Rāma offered in the fire oblations to all gods, Rudra and Visnu of its flesh, reciting various pacificatory incantations.

The strength of the sentiment in favour of animal sacrifice as an essential element in the religious complex of the Ikśvāku family was so great that even after 800 years or more after the Buddhist and Jaina preaching of non-slaughter the elite Hindus accepted it in their standard religious worship. Kālidāsa¹⁰ describing the rehabilitation of Ayodhyā by Rāma's son Kuśa, has particularly mentioned the fact that the worship offered to the town-deity was accompanied by offerings of animal flesh.

Another Vedic trait of the Rāmāyana is the prevalence of the Solar cult. The Sun, Sūrya or Savitr is a deity of the Rgvedic pantheon and we have seen that the Kassites, too, had Surya as a god in their pantheon. But as Savitr he is specially Rgvedic, Indo-Aryan, not shared with them by any ancient ethnic unit. The famous prayer addressed to him, the Gāyatrī, as it is known, which a high caste Hindu was wont to repeat two times a day, is an ennobling text and has been valued by some students as much more appealing than that addressed to the sane deity by the reformer Pharaoh of ancient Egypt, Amenhotep III. The prayer happens to be a part of a hymn in the Book III of the Rgveda and is the work of sage Viśvāmitra.11. The Rāmāyaņa presents us a new aspect of the Sun-god. The Sun is made a war-deity, success in battle depending on his favour. Sage Agastya divulges to Rāma what he calls Sūryahrdaya (sun-heart), which is a string of names of gods, some of them of the Rgvedic pantheon

and still others that are minor ones, some belong to the modern Brahmanic pantheon, and some epithets of the Sun, old or new ones, appropriately worded for victory-securing and asks him to repeat it thrice to ensure success against Rāvaṇa with whom Rāma's fight was just about to start.

It is befitting as Rāma belongs to the Solar dynasty. No such incantation figures in the later period. In the *Mahābhārata* Karṇa is the son of the Sun-god who presented him with impenetrable armour.

Another marked feature of the living pattern of the family of Rāma and of the residents of Ayodhyā depicted in the Rāmāyana is the prominence of wine and of meat meals. One, not knowing the Vedic people's fondness for a sacrificial use of drink, gets a shock at reading that Sītā vowed both to the sacred river Gangā and the boisterous dark river Yamunā, while crossing them with Rāma on her exile, ample amount of sura (wine) on their safe return to Ayodhyā. To Gangā Sītā promised worship with one thousand jars full of wine and rice cooked with flesh, including, it appears, human flesh: the compound is awakard as the word 'bhista' is placed after on the sudden and premature death of Indumati. Kālidāsa has told us that the kind specially mentioned the drink of wine that Indumati had, just before she expired, from out of his own mouth.12 In the enjoyment pattern of the family, drinking of wine by husband and wife was an item of endearment. Rāma and Sītā's enjoyment, as narrated in the Rāmāyana13 being rather a tame affair compared with that of Aja and Indumati.

The Vedic rites were also known to the non-Aryan tribes like the Rākṣasas and the Vānaras. Rāvaṇa is himself represented in the Rāmāyaṇa as an observer of the Vedic ritual.¹⁴ His minister, Supārśva (Avindhya), who is described as virtuous and pure, is introduced as saying to him 'Veda-vidyā-vrataḥ snātas svakarmaṇi ratas tatha/striyāḥ kasmād badham vīra mayase Rākṣaseśvara¹⁵//Vibhīṣana, in his eulogy on his brother after his death, says, 'esho hitāgnis ca mahātapas vedāntagaḥ karmasu cāgrya-suraḥ.' 'He had placed the sacrificial fire, was very austere, had read the concluding treatises of the Veda, and was an eminent hero in rites.'¹⁶

Again, it is related in the 113th section of the Rāmāyaṇa (Bombay ed.) that Rāvaṇa was buried with the usual Brahmanical ceremonies, though the commentator says that the Brāhmaṇas who were concerned with the rites were Rākṣasa-Brāhmaṇas (Rākṣasa-dvijaḥ). They formed with Vedic rites a funeral pile of faggots

of sandalwood, with 'padmaka' wood, 'usna' grass, and sandal, and covered with a quilt of deer's hair. They, Vibhīṣana included, with afflicted hearts, adorned Ravana with perfumes and garlands, and various vestments, and besprinkled him with fired grain, their faces being covered with tears.

Gorresio18 remarks that the funeral rites of the Aryan Brāhmaņas are here introduced as practised among the Rāksasas and races of different origin and worship, in the same way as Homer represents Grecian ceremonies as having been celebrated

in Troy.19

The description which Vālmīki gives in the 6th canto of the Bālakāṇḍa is a good index of the Aryan taste, artistic tendencies and aesthetic subtleties. The big cities of the period were great centres where the arts were nurtured and encouraged under royal patronage. Even forest dwellers, the Vanaras and the cannibals, the Rākṣasas were highly advanced in the domain of art and aesthetics.

Daśaratha's body was kept in a capacious pan with oil to prevent decay and disintegration till the arrival of Bharata.20 Hence, as among ancient Egyptians, among ancient Indians too, knowledge of corpse preservation must have been largely prevalent. Thus we find that like literature, science too had an important place in the scheme of things of the epic period.

Kṛṣi or agriculture was the major industry of the country. This is evident from the fact that the Vaisyas who assembled after the death of Dasaratha, are referred to as kṛṣi-gorakṣa-jivinah, i.e.

subsisting on agriculture and cattle-rearing.21

There was also prevalence of sea-voyages. In the Aditya and Brahmanāradīya Purāṇas, quoted by Raghunandana in his Udvāhatattva it is laid down that sea-voyage (samudra-yātrā) alongwith intercaste marriage and certain other customs are forbidden in the Kaliyuga which, according to Hindu chronology, began in B.C. 3101. But the archaeological and literary remains in Indo-China and the East Indian archipelago disclose the fact that the injunction regarding sea-voyage was more honoured in the breach than in observance for a very long time even in the Kaliyuga. The Brahmanic Sanskrit inscriptions of Borneo and Annam, the Kavi literature of Java, the stupendous Hindu monuments of Cambodia bear unerring testimony to the fact that during the 1st millennium of the Christian era and for sometime after the Hindus regularly undertook sea-voyages either to found colonies in these lands and islands or for commercial purposes. Baudhāyana (c. 4th century A.D.) includes sea-voyage (samudrasamyana) among the sins that render a man outcaste (pataniyani)

and provides expiatory ceremonies.

According to Baudhayana²² sea-voyage is sinful for a southerner but permissible for a northerner. His view that sea-voyage is permissible in the north is apparently in conflict with what he says about the seat of authoritative usages. He says that the country to the east of Vinasana (the place where the river Saraswati disappears) to the south of the Himalayas (one of the Vindhya ranges) to the east of the Kalakavana is called Āryavarta and whatever is practised in this region is authoritative.²³

REFERENCES:

¹ Dr. Macdonell writes in his *India's Past* (p. 4), 'Neither the ancient influence of Greece, nor the medieval rule of Islam, nor the modern dominion of Christian Britain have essentially altered the civilization and mentality of the Hindus'. And 'all these we find not as the mere shells of a dead culture' as in Egypt and Babylon, Rome and Greece but 'palpitating with life as expression of vitality of a highly cultivated and self-reliant people. We touch the very ideas around which the entire life of the people gathered and flourished, from which they drew inspiration, and which they sought to realise in life'. See also Mukherjee, S. C., *The Cultural History of India: An Apology in Indian Culture*, vol. VI, p. 218. Cf. also Md. Iqbal's famous poem 'Sāre Jahāñse Acchā Hindostāñ Hamārā'

'Yunāno Misro Rumā sab mit gaye jahāñse, Abtak magar bākī rahā namoñ niśāñ hamārā'.

Or is it that Vālmīki, the composer of the epic, saw the non-Aryans wearing an Aryan spectacle and knowingly or unknowingly found the Aryan traits among the non-Aryans. The general contention is that Vālmīki himself had neither firsthand knowledge about the non-Aryan tribes about whom he discussed in his epic nor had he himself sufficient knowledge of the South.

- ² Cf. the idealism of a modern ruler. To satiate his own desires and ends by whatever means possible; narrowness, selfishness and hypocrisy are the traits of a modern ruler—what a fall as compared with the character of the ruler as presented in the epic—a fall from heaven to hell, ten times by contrast.
- The passion-intoxication is, however, embedded in the character of the demons and the non-Aryans like the Vānaras. Cf. the actions of Sūrpaṇakhā, Rāvaṇa, Vāli, and Sugrīva. Of course in the epic the course of events, without the shortcomings, would have been otherwise. Were these then introduced in the characters by the poet himself with deliberation; the plain narration of the virtues of the Aryans was however not the main idea of the poet. And to make his poetry dramatically warranted such incorporations were necessary.
- See Vedic Age, I, pp. 146-56, 194, 197.

- * Pargiter, Ancient Indian Historical Tradition, pp. 295, 297ff.
- ⁶ It is interesting to note that in the Tibetan version of the Rāmāyaṇa, Rāma was banished towards the Himalayan region. In Kalhana's Rājataranginī (River of Kings) after Gonanda III (1184 B.C.) in Kashmir four kings have the names made famous in the Rāmāyaṇa as the Rākṣasas. They are Vibhiṣana, Indrajit, Rāvaṇa and Vibhiṣana II. Still more interesting is the fact that Rāvaṇa is said to have erected the shrine of Vaṭeśvara and a monastery or maṭha having four hills. The 45th king of the line was Kuśa who was succeded by Lava. See R. S. Pandit, Rājataranginī, pp. 581-95.
- Pargiter, op. cit., p. 297 f. It will be interesting to note in this context that at the same time the existence of the non-Aryans may be easily inferred. Traditional history mentions Rākṣasas, Vānaras, Asuras, Daityas, Dānavas, Nāgas, Nishādas, Dasyus, Dāsas, Pulindas, Sakas, Yavanas, Kambojas, Parādas, Pahlavas and others who appear to have been outside the Aryan fold. Originally, these denoted human beings, but as they were generally the enemies of the Aryans, these names became terms of opprobrium and abuse which led to the attribution of evil characters to these peoples. Certain Aryan kings were termed Dāṇavas or Asuras due to their evil character; cf. Hiraṇyakasipu. Finally, these terms came to be associated with demoniac beings and were used synonymously with demons.
- Kośala roughly corresponds to modern Awadh. Its earlier capital was about 1 mile from modern Fyzabad. Śrāvastī, the later capital has been identified with Sahet-Mahet in Bharaich or Gonda district: Ref. Majumdar, R. C., Ancient India, p. 70.
- It may be mentioned that Rājagṛha, in the 6th century B.C. had a perimeter of 25 miles, as revealed in the excavations. Megasthenes gives Pāṭaliputra an area of 15 sq. miles. In this context, it is interesting to note that the Rāmāyaṇa takes no notice of Pāṭaliputra though near this very city Rāma marched on his way to the forest. Pāṭaliputra or modern Patna was founded by Kālāšoka during whose reign the Second Buddhistic Council was held in 380 B.C. The author of the book has mentioned minor cities such as Košāmbī and Kānyakubja. It may be that Pāṭaliputra existed by some other name during the period of Vālmīki. This makes the composition of the Rāmāyaṇa to be earlier than the 4th century B.C.

In the original part of the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana$ we do not get Sāketa as the name of Ayodhyā. This points to the conclusion that the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana$ was composed before the time. The earliest Buddhist literature being composed in the 5th century B.C., it can perhaps be assumed that the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana$ was composed in the 6th century B.C. at the latest.

About the time of Pāṇini Prākṛt was the dialect of the country where the Epic was composed. The language in which the book has been composed, that is Sanskrit, could not be understood by the people in general, besides, some of the words do not tally with the system of Pāṇini for their formations. Both of these go to show that the book was composed at pre-Pāṇini period. Pāṇini, as the accepted opinion goes, flourished in the 4th century B.C. (Prof. Goldstucker is of opinion that Pāṇini's date cannot be later than the 8th century B.C. If

Goldstucker's view is taken to be correct, the composition of the

Rāmāyana took place at about 9th century B.C.

Another interesting point to note is that the original Rāmāyaṇa consists of two distinct parts. The first describes the events of the Court of King Daśaratha at Ayodhyā and other consequences. There is nothing fantastic in the narrative. The second is based on myths and is full of marvels and fantasies. Messers Lassen and Weber are of opinion that the story was intended to represent allegorically the first attempts of the Aryans to conquer the Deccan.

- 1º Raghuvamsam, XVI.39.
- 11 Rgveda, III.62.10.
- 12 Raghuvamsam, VIII.68.
- 13 Ibid., IV.48.6.
- 14 Kausika Sūtra, 106.
- ¹⁵ Lankākānda, 83.58ff. Bombay ed. VI. 72.62ff. 'Why dost thou heroic Rāvana, lord of the Rākṣasas, who knowest the Veda, hast practised the prescribed discipline, and art an initiated householder, and devoted to duty, meditate the slaughter of a woman.'
- 16 Ibid., VI.3.23.
- 17 Ibid., VI.113.112ff.
- ¹⁸ Note 94, vol. x, p. 310.
- ¹⁰ It may be that Vālmīki was not aware of the funerary customs of the Rākṣasas.

It is said in the Mahābhārata (Rāmopakhyāna in the Vanaparvan 16529ff.) that 'the five elements forsook the great Rāvaṇa, and the constituents of his body, flesh and blood perished, when he was burnt up by the divine weapon (brahmāstra), and not even any ashes were seen'.

- ²⁰ Rāmāyaṇa, II.66.14.
- ²¹ Ibid., II.67.18.
- ²² Dharmaśāstra, II.2.2.
- ²² Ganganath, Baudhāyana's Prāyascitta for Sea-Voyage, vol. III, pt. 2, p. 35.

IV

ALLEGORY

Lassen and Weber, followed by some other scholars, consider the Rāma story to be allegorical. Rāma, they held, symbolizes Aryan culture, and his expedition against Ravana represents the cultural domination of the southern regions by the Aryans, that is the spread of Aryan culture to South India and Ceylon was effected by Rāma.1 As already discussed above, this view, however, is not borne out by the epic, for it does not show any change in the culture of the South as the result of Rama's expedition, nor does its author seem to be quite familiar in the South. Vālmīki, however, finds the traits of Aryan culture already existing among the aborigines of the South; his Rāvaņa is a great Vedic scholar and has sufficient knowledge of the Vedic rites and ceremonies2 and so is Hanumana belonging to the Vanara tribe, who was specially noted for his Vedic lore and his knowledge of grammar.3 The character of Vibhīṣaṇa, the younger brother of the demon-king, is bred with Aryan culture, as it were. It seems as if there were already Aryan tinges in the Rākṣasa and Vānara cultures.

According to Wheeler, the epic symbolizes the conflict between Brahmanism and Buddhism and the invasion of Lankā testifies to the hatred of the poet, who composed it, towards the Buddhists of Ceylon whom he represents as Rākṣasas.⁴ Jacobi is one of those scholars who are of opinion that this story is no allegory, but just an ancient Indian myth transformed into a massive narrative of earthly adventures. Monier Williams thinks that the story of the conflict between Rāma and Rāvaṇa contains a moral allegory. It seems to typify the great mystery of the struggle ever going on between the forces of good and evil.

Some scholars again suggest that there is a philosophical

allegory in the epic. Rāma and Sītā represent respectively Purusa and Prakṛti. Mārīca, in the guise of the golden deer, is māyā. Sītā, held in confinement by Rāvaṇa, is the lost human soul.5 And her fire ordeal symbolizes the redemption of Prakrti from the taints of māyā. Finally, both Purusa and Prakrti enter into their original state. This allegory conveys in popular form the basic abstruse ideas like Advaita (monism), Dvaita (dualism) Viśistādvaita (pure monism) propounded in the Hindu Philosophy and chiefly represented by the Sankhya system. According to them Rāma is the Purusa the actor, Sītā is the Prakrti, the energy or power-both being manifest aspects of One Reality. Male is the actor, female the energy. But Siva (Purusa) is powerless, niskala, without his Sakti (Prakrti, Kālī) and the principle of two-in-one is still manifest in the Ardhanāriśvara figure or the Yab-Yum (Glorious Father and Glorious Mother in communion) figure. This division of One in Two took place first in the spiritual plane prior to manifestation in matter.

When manifest in the material plane Purusa (Rāma) gets enmeshed in Prakrti (Sītā). The two going into exile is the allegorical way of expressing the idea of manifestation on the Primal Principle's descent into the matter. At this stage Purusa (Rāma) forgets his true Self and is lost to Prakrti (His human ego or Self represented in Sītā). Prakrti, being over inquisitive, like Eve in the Garden of Eden, desires the beautiful deer, a deceptive disguise of māyā, assumed by Marici (cf. the word Marīcikā, illusion), the illusory Satan, and was lost. Purusa (Rāma), now at one with Prakrti (Sītā), in this context, is the human soul or the line dividing the composite Being including both Matter and Spirit. Rāma and Sītā are the two appearances like Adam and Eve (Man and Woman) and in the process the Soul (Sītā) loses contact with her reality of Spirit or Purusa. Purusa (Rāma) Himself, like Adam, is in no better state. Then Purusa (the Divine Spirit) goes in quest of the human soul, which is in complete grip of the world of illusion (symbolised in Rāvana's charming Lankā).

This allegorical interpretation reminds one of the Parable of the Prodigal Son taught by Jesus, in which the lost human soul willingly goes back to his father. Gautama Buddha also taught the story of the Prodigal Son which says that it is the father who goes out in quest of the son and brings him back home. Rāma's going out to rescue Sītā resounds the Buddhist version about the lost human soul. Unlike the Christian and Buddhist parables Rāma, even after finding out Sītā (the lost human soul) is not ready to accept the rescued soul, which is plausibly besmirched

with taints of delusion. Sitā has, therefore, to face the Fire ordeal, as fire burns up all taints. But the taints are not completely burnt up for Sītā still yarns for Rāma (Purusa). And Purusa himself is not the Ultimate Reality. He is only a partial manifestation of the One. Thus Fire purification is inadequate for Sītā and she (i.e. the human soul) in the end, therefore, reduces herself to Nothing (Śunya or Nirvāna or Void), which is the final redemption of the human soul. Simultaneously, as Rāma, himself not the Ultimate Reality, is still in partial grip of Māyā by lamenting on the departed Sītā (though this Māyā is his own creation), he drowns himself, that is, he too, like Sītā, goes into dissolution. Thus both resumé are absorbed back into their original state-the One Eternal Reality, in Buddhism termed as Nirvāna or Sunya (Void), in Hinduism, the Immeasurable or the Infinite. With the annihilation the finite enters into the Infinite.

In idealising the hero (Rāma) as the paragon of virtue, the poet has depicted his adversaries as embodiments of Sin and Vice. In fact, the epic is the story of Virtue winning over Vice. The Rāmāyana has an obvious allegorical significance and suggestiveness, as indicated in the Atmabodha of Sankarācārya, according to which the soul (Rāma) after crossing moha (delusion) here pictured in the form of forest, and killing raga (passion) and dvesa (hatred) symbolizing the raksasa shrine resplendently united with śānti (peace) in the form of Sītā.6

There is also another interpretation which equates the Rāmāyana with the artha-pañcaka doctrine of the Vaisnavas, stating Rāma to be God, Laksmana (also Sītā) the soul seeking God's grace (saranagati) as the means (upāya) and attainment

(prāpti) of God as the goal (phala).

Shri Ramakrishna imparted a new allegorical interpretation when he said, "Rāma, who is God Himself, was only two and a half cubits ahead of Laksmana. But Laksmana could not see Him, because Sītā stood between them." Laksmana may be compared to Jīva, and Sītā to Māyā. Man cannot see God on account of

the barrier of Māyā.7

According o Swami Vivekananda Rāma is the Paramātmā and that Sītā is the Jivātmā and each man's or woman's body is the city of Lanka (Ceylon). The Jivatma which is enclosed in the body, or captured in the island of Lanka, always desired to be in affinity with the Paramātmā, or Rāma. But the Rākṣasas would not allow it and the Raksasas represent certain traits of character. For instance, Vibhisana represents the sattva guna, Rāvaņa rajas and Kumbhakarņa tamas. Sattva guņa means goodness, rajas means lust and passion, and tamas darkness, stupor, avarice, malice and its concomitants. These guṇas keep back Sitā or Jivātmā, which is in the body or Laṅkā from joining Paramātmā i.e. Rāma. Sītā, thus imprisoned and trying to unite with her Lord, receives a visit from Haunmāna the guru or divine teacher, who shows her the Lord's ring, which is Brahmajñāna, the supreme vision that destroys all illusions, and thus Sītā finds the way to be at one with Rāma, or in other words the Jivātmā finds itself one with the Paramātmā.8

Rabindranath Tagore goes deeper into the symbolism lying behind the epic and to him the essence of the story is agriculture (Lat. ager, field; culture, cultivation). The term 'Sītā' means the line of plough (halarekhā), born from the mouth of Janaka's plough. She is, therefore, the foster-daughter of the King Janaka, who was virtually an Aryan agriculturist (cultivator of fields). Sītā's entry into the womb of the Mother Earth also attributes to her relation with the field. The term 'Rāma' (whose colour is green like that of the tender grass) carries the meaning of pleasantness of the green pastoral land.9 If Rāma is pleasantness of the land, Laksmana is the property of goodness, i.e. fortunate (lasmivanta), and therefore he unlike his other brothers, has to be the companion of Rāma and Sītā in their sojourn in the midst of Nature. The poet is of opinion that the Rākṣasas, because of their habit concentrated on a somewhat urban culture, were averse to agriculture in the South. The poet thinks that gold is the symbol of affluence and the source of the indomitable power of the demon-king Rāvaņa was gold or wealth, and it was their city of Lanka which was, therefore, called Suvarnalanka, Lankā made of gold. Furthermore, Rāma's recovery of Ahalyā [i.e. land where the plough (hala) cannot be used] indicates the transformation of fallows into cultivated lands.10

The Rākṣasas, the holders of gold, tried to disrupt the lives of the Aryan agriculturists by alluring them with gold and this is hinted at in the Rāmāyaṇa in the episode of the stealing of Sītā in consequence of her infatuation for a golden deer, mārīca (mārīca from marīcikā, illusion, gold is always an illusion). More often, one is lost in the quest of gold. There is no end of this mad pursuit and the end is always tragic. During the period of Vālmīki, there was perhaps the thirst for gold and more gold. The poet Vālmīki, therefore, for camouflaging the extant situation, introduced in his poem the story of the deer of illusion (māyāmṛga).¹¹

Rabindranath says that the stealing of Sītā, the symbol of

beauty of agriculture, took place in hemanta, a season when the forest is bedecked with dews and Nature puts on a new garment, and the corns of paddy in the fields have golden hues. This season was the most favourite of Rama but he had to lose Sītā also in the same season. Sītā got enamoured with the illusive deer (i.e. dhānya) and begged for dhana (i.e. gold) and that was her fatal flaw. Rāma ran after the deer, the embodiment of the demon-god of gold and that was his flaw. Sitā asked for the deer, Rāma ran for the deer, Laksmana left for helping Rāma in the jargonic pursuit and the consequence was the loss of Sītā, loss of the beauty impersonated of agriculture and which was natural. Both Rāma and Laksmana chased the deer (dhana or wealth) which is only artificial and brought their own doom. Had they been better judge of the situation they would not have run after a mirage and ultimately lose the hard-won Sītā, the epitome of verdural lands.12

REFERENCES:

- Weber, On the Rāmāyaņa, p. 14f.
- ² Rāmāyaṇa, Sundarakāṇḍa, 4.13.
- 3 Ibid., 4.29-34.
- 'The History of India, II, pp. 75, 227. This view is however untenable because the Rākṣasas though opposed to the Aryans were, nevertheless, sacrificers and cannibals, which goes against their identity with the Buddhists. Their description, as presented by Vālmīki, does not indicate their being Buddhists.
- ⁶ Cf. Keats' Ode to a Nightingale where the imprisoned princess is the embodiment of the enchained human soul.
- Tirtva moharnavam hatvā rāgadvesādirāksasan Santi-Sītā-samyukta atmā-Ramo virājate.
- Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna (tr.) by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, p. 101.
- ⁸ Swami Vivekananda, The Complete Works, vol. IV, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, p. 415.
- The second Rāma (Balarāma) of the Purānas also holds plough in hand. Parasurama has axe in hand much needed for cutting away trees and shrubs for turning woodlands into arable lands. That is, he is also the forerunner of creating verdure lands in the midst of barren desert.
- 10 Cf. Rabindranath, Manasi (poem Ahalyar Prati), 1890:

Chhuțița sahasrapathe marudigvijaye sahasra ākāre, uthita se ksubdha haye tomar paşan gheri karite nipat anurvarā-abhisāp taba.

A STUDY ON THE RAMAYANAS

¹¹ Kon māyāmṛga kothāy nitya svarņa-jhalake karichhe nṛtya, tāhāre bāñdhite lolupa citta chhuţichhe vṛddha-vālak.

Rabindranath, poem Nagarasangīt, Citrā, 1891.

¹² However, to stretch such ideas of allegory and symbolism too far and try to see symbolism in every character and incident of the *Rāmāynna*, would be absurd and far from the intention of Vālmīki himself.

V

VĀLMĪKI RĀMĀYAŅA AND OTHER RĀMĀYAŅAS

It is generally accepted that the Vālmīki or Ādi Rāmāyana is a homogenous work by a single author, Valmiki. There are three recensions of this work, consisting of 24,000 slokas in seven books and all of them suffer addition and interpolation. These recensions reflect regional influence, and thus differ on many points. Critical examination now suggests that it must have passed not only through many stages of development but also that it contains numerous interpolations and the addition of Books I (Adi kānda) and VII (Uttara kānda). It is said that after his bath in the Tamasā, Vālmīki chanced to see a fond pair of birds at play with each other. Suddenly, the male was shot at by a hunter and the consequent grief of the female made Vālmīki involuntarily burst into a poetic utterance,1 a pronouncement of curse on the wicked murderer. According to the Adhyātma-Rāmāyana, Vālmīki lived among robbers when he was a young man, though he was a Brahmana by birth. The same tradition is to be found in the Bengali recension.2

In the Harivamsa there is a mention of a dramatic representation of the Rāmāyaṇa.³ It is still more important, however, that the Mahābhārata (VII.143.66) quotes a śloka once sung by Vālmīki which is actually to be found in the Ādi Rāmāyaṇa (VII.81.25). Vālmīki is mentioned in several places in the Mahābhārata as a 'great ascetic' and venerable Rsi by the side

of Vasistha and other Rsis of ancient time.

It appears that the authors of the ancient Buddhist texts in the 4th and 3rd century B.C. had as yet no knowledge of the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana$, but that they knew ballads utilised by Vālmīki for his Rāma epic, and that on the other hand the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana$ was influenced at least indirectly by Buddhism. The idea of explaining

the exceeding mildness, gentleness and tranquility which are ascribed to Rāma, corroborates Buddhistic under-currents. In this connection, it will be interesting to note that when the whole land was strangely influenced by Buddhism, an epic was composed by a non-Buddhist. But the Buddhistic influence could be felt when we find the hero of the epic inspite of all his splendid demonbattles is more of a sage after the heart of the Buddha than a hero of war. From this we can argue that the Rāmāyaṇa came into being at a time when Buddhism has already spread in the Eastern India and the Buddhist Canon was in course of formation.⁴

In the context of discussing about the Vālmīki Rāmāyana it is worthy of note that the Rāmāyana of Vālmīki essentially differs from the Mahābhārata of Vyāsa in many respects. The Rāmāyana is much shorter but of much greater uniformity. In so far as an epic consists of a grand hero, a grand theme and a grand style the Mahābhārata in its present form can scarcely be called an actual epic. On the other hand, the Rāmāyana in the form in which we have it today, is still a fairly unified heroic poem. As regards authorship while the Rāmāyana can be attributed to a poet named Vālmīki and we have no reason to doubt that a poet of that name really lived and first shaped the ballads, which were scattered in the mouths of the bards, into the form of a unified poem. But, although indigenous tradition names Vyāsa as the author of the Mahābhārata his identity cannot be fully established. He is a mythical seer of ancient times who is supposed to be also the compiler of the Vedas and of the Puranas.

Vālmīki is taken to be the first poet (ādikavi) or author of ornate poetry and he has always remained the pattern to which all later Indian poets admirably aspired. The essential factor of Indian ornate poetry or the so-called 'kāvya' after Vālmīki is that greater importance is attached to the form than to the matter and contents of the poem, and that so-called alamkāras (embellishments) such as similies and descriptions, especially of Nature spun out with new metaphors and comparisons, poetic figures, puns, and so on are extensively used. All these are in abundance in the Rāmāyaṇa, while in the Mahābhārata they are not so common.

There are certain other differences which are also to be taken into consideration.

The atmosphere of the Mahābhārata differs from that of the Rāmāyaṇa. The battle-scenes in the Mahābhārata give the impression that the poet belonged to a rough race of warriors, and had himself seen bloody fields while in the Rāmāyaṇa the

poet is merely a story-teller in relating battles of which his only source of information is the reports he has heard. There is not that embittered hatred, that fierce resentment between Rāma and Rāvana or between Laksmana and Indrajit as in the Mahābhārata when we read of the battle between Arjuna and Karna or between Bhīma and Duryodhana. The Sītā of the Rāmāyana, when she is stolen, abducted and persecuted by Ravana, or when she is rejected by Rāma, always maintains a certain calmness and meekness in her accusations and lamentations, and in her speeches there is not a trace of the wild passion which we so often find in Draupadī of the Mahābhārata. Kunti and Gandhārī are true hero-mothers of a warlike race, while Kausalya and Kaikeyi in the Rāmāyana represent wives of a more refined civilization. The Mahābhārata reflects a rougher civilization of the Western India, while the Rāmāyana presents a more refined civilization of the Eastern India and thus we can say that the two epics represent the culture of two different regions of India. The Mahābhārata undoubtedly belongs to the western and northern parts of India and the Rāmāyana to the eastern part. Peoples of the northern and western India are the principal actors of the Mahābhārata while the Rāmāyana deals with the peoples of the Eastern and Southern India.

As early as in the second half of the 1st century A.D. the Jain monk Vimala Suri recast the Rāma legend in his Prakrit poem Paumacāriya5 (Padmacarita), bringing it into line with the religion and philosophy of the Jains. The poem shows acquaintance with Valmiki's Rāmāyana, but contains particular details which have nothing to do with the Jaina outlook and which, consequently, are of great value in studying the basic Rāma legend that has been worked out by various authors in different ways. The later Jain recensions of the Rāma legend are based on the Paumācāriya. In this work Rāvaņa is not a monster, he is a great sage and ascetic and is the father of Sītā.⁷ Besides Hanumāna (Mārutī) is not a monkey and like Rāvaņa he is also a Vidyādhara, a semi-divine being. Vimala's religious sermons have a lofty didactic tone and he also tells many an episode of romantic and legendary interest. It was obviously Vimala's intention to offer his co-religionists a substitute for the poem of Vālmīki which was already famous at that time. In about 600 A.D. the Rāmāyana was already famous in far-off Cambodia as a sacred book of Hinduism, for an inscription reports that a certain Somasarman presented 'the Rāmāyana, the Purāna and the complete Bharata' to a temple.

A public recitation of the Rāmāyana is already mentioned in Kumāralatā's Kalpanāmanditikā, which was probably written towards the close of the 2nd century A.D. In Chinese translations of Buddhist tales, which are said to date back to the 3rd century A.D., the Rāma legend is related in a form prepared to suit Buddhist purposes. We can know also from other Chinese sources that at the time of the Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu (c. 4th century A.D.) the Rāmāyana was a well-known popular poem among the Buddhists in India.8

The circumstance that the ancient poem already served as a model for Aśvaghosha, and hence must have been composed long before the time of the latter, agrees well with the entire absence in the old and genuine $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana$, of any traces of Greek influence or of an acquaintance with the Greeks.

Rāma does not appear in the old Upanişads. As an epic the Rāmāyana is very far removed from the Veda and the Rāma legend is only bound to Vedic literature by very slender threads. Whether the King Janaka of Videha, who is frequently mentioned in the Upanisads, is the same, as the father of Sītā, remains an open question. Weber¹⁰ has pointed out a few slight connections between the Rāmāyana and the Yajurveda. Sītā, the heroine of the epic, probably belongs to the oldest elements of the Rāma legend. Her name signifies 'field furrow,' she came forth out of the earth, and Mother Earth received her again. Although the latter feature of the legend occurs only in the late Book VII, yet it may be very old. The idea of a goddess of agriculture, Sītā, who is already invoked in a blessing on the land, in the Rgveda11 is extremely ancient, and certainly reaches back far into the Vedic period. The Grhyasūtras have preserved for us prayer formulae, in which Sītā is personified in an extremely life-like manner-'lotus-crowned, radiant in every limb, black-eyed' and so on. Yet Weber¹² is probably right when he remarks that the Vedic idea of Sītā as the goddess of Field-furrow is 'separated by a wild gulf from the representation of her in the Rāma legend'. There is also no reference to indicate that songs of Rāma and Sītā already existed in Vedic13 times. Even if we agree with Jacobi and are inclined to find in the legend of the battle of Rāma with Rāvaṇa, another form of the ancient myth of the battle of Indra with Vrtra, the 'wide gulf' which separates the Veda from the epic, would still remain.14

The earliest literary evidence of the Rāma story, of its first component, is recorded in the 13 Pāli verses (gāthās) of the Daśaratha Jātaka (No. 461) which perhaps form the nucleus of

the Rāmāyana, although points of difference in respect of theme and names are noticeable. According to this Jātaka Daśaratha was a king of Banaras and not of Ayodhyā. It might be that the king of Banaras had a special leaning to the city of Banaras (Kāśi) and the change of place-name is due to that fact. It is said that Daśaratha by his eldest queen, whose name is not given, had two sons, Rāma Pandita and Lakkhana Kumāra and a daughter named Sītādevī. After some time when Dasaratha's eldest queen died the king took another wife, who bore him a son named Bharatakumāra. This queen's name is also not given. The palace-intrigue, as presented in the Jātaka, is substantially the same as that in the Vālmīki Rāmāyana. The difference is that in the Jātaka the king, fearing some mischief from the queen, asks his two sons to go to a neighbouring kingdom or forest and live there as long as he himself is alive. He fixed the period of their stay abroad for 12 years, and not 14 years as in the Vālmīki Rāmāyana, as settled by the soothsayers and asks them to return only after that period and take charge of the kingdom. The exiled princes, Rama and Lakkhana, together with their sister Sītādevī,13 go to the Himalayas, and not to the South, though, as we see in another place, a gatha indicating its knowledge of the epic association of Rāma with the Dandaka forest. Lakkhana and Sītā came back to Banaras before the expiry of the full term at the end of 9 years. Rāma remained behind in the forest to complete the term. When the term of 12 years expired Rāma returns, marries his sister Sītā and assumes the crown.

In this work there is no mention of the abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa, and all the subsequent events. It is generally believed to have been based on a much older version of the Rāma story. There is, of course, no positive hint in the gāthās to Rāma and Sītā being man and wife. It is only in the commentary of a much later period that Sītā is said to have been made the principal queen of Rāma at his coronation ceremony on his return from exile. The Vessantara Jātaka however alludes to Sītā's devotion and loyalty to her husband Rāma even in adversity while they were in exile. The relationship of Rāma and Sītā as being brother and sister married to each other and the description of Sītā as ayonija in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa seems, therefore, absurd. 16

In this context, certain facts may be recalled for our interest. Since Sītā, inspite of her constant association with Rāma for 25 years, bore no children to him after their triumphant return to Ayodhyā, one is inclined to give credence to the Buddhist legend, as recorded in the Daśaratha Jātaka that she was the sister of

Rāma, whom she married after the period of exile was over. The reason for such marriage may be that Sītā could find none else willing to take her to be wife on account of her pollution by the touch of the Demon's hand. Again, since Rāma abandoned Sītā most heartlessly at a time when her delivery was drawing near one might think that she must have conceived of Rāvaṇa, for, when the fact of her pregnancy, which Rāma could not consciously trace to himself, was discovered by him, he, who had become as jealous and peevish as Henry VIII, cast her away into the jungle, and later on, when the proof of her guilt appeared before the eyes of the world in the form of twin sons, he buried her alive in a bottomless¹⁷ pit.

Among other Jātaka stories which can be related to the Rāmāyana mention may be made of the Vessantara Jātaka (No. 519). In this Jātaka there is a stanza in which a demon persuades faithful Sambula to desert her sick husband and to follow him, uttering the same threat as is made by Ravana to Sītā in the Aśoka grove, namely, if she does not agree to surrender, he will devour her for his breakfast.¹⁸ It may further be argued that some of the Ramayanic episodes were copied from the Buddhist tales. The love of Māddī for her husband Vessantara in the Jātaka reminds us of the devotion of Sītā towards her husband Rāma of the Vālmīki Rāmāyana. In another Jātaka, the Sāma Jātaka (No. 540) the woes of Dukataka finds a resonance in the tale of Andhaka-muni of the Vālmīki epic. The story is practically identical with that of Dasaratha's killing the son of Andhaka-muni, which incident Dasaratha narrates from his death-bed.

The Jayaddisa Jātaka (No. 518) contains a gāthā showing that the author of this gāthā was acquainted with the Brahmanical version of the Rāma story. The Anamaka Jātaka (No. 521), which was translated into Chinese in the 3rd century A.D. (the original of which is now lost) refers to most of the incidents found in the Vālmīki Rāmāyana without giving the names of the characters. Rāma, quite naturally, is here regarded as a Bodhisattva The story of Rsyaṣrnga (Isiṣrnga in Pāli) recurs in the Jātakas (Nos. 523 & 526) and an old form of it is preserved in the Nalinika Jātaka (No. 527). The Jātaka stories no doubt contain some of the ancient stories of pre-Buddhist India.

In earlier Brahmanical literature, there is hardly any reference to any of the Rāmāyaṇa personalities and incidents. King Janaka of Videha is mentioned in the Upaniṣads, but he is quite different from Janaka of Mithilā, the foster-father of Sītā. Sītā in the

Vedas is the furrow in filling the earth considered as a deity, and connected with agriculture. There is no mention of Rāma, not to speak of the demon-king Ravana or of the monkey chiefs like Sugrīva, Bāli and Hanumāna in the early Vedic literature. In the Buddhist literature, e.g. the Pāli Jātakas we first come across names of the Rāmāyaṇa characters and the Jātaka period is about the 4th century B.C. and not earlier. But there are references to the Mahābhārata characters and incidents in some of these early works. In Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī (c. 5th century B.C.) there are names of the Mahābhārata personalities, but not of any from the Rāmāyana. Patañjali in his Mahābhāsya also does not mention any Rāmāyana character. Thus during the early Buddhist period (i.e. before the 3rd century B.C.) the Rāma legend was neither well-known nor had any impact on the then literatures. But strangely it is noticed that the authors of the Jaina and Buddhist literature were much interested in the Rāma saga and by the 1st or 2nd century A.D. the Rāmāyaṇa was already a finished product. Should we then think that it is through the Jaina and Buddhist authors that the Rāmāyaṇa gained popularity?

In this context, the question which naturally crops up in mind is that who made this saga popular and why this saga won the heart of common man. Verily, the credit goes first to its composer and then to those who carried it far and wide. In discussing about the composer we do not, as usual, know much about him or about his personal life. It is generally agreed that the epic, at least its five Books (II to VI) was composed by one single poet and that his name was Vālmīki; the other two Books (I & VII) are later interpolations.19 Whatever might be the name of the poet if the authorship of the epic goes to a single individual, he was undoubtedly no ordinary poet. He was a poet in the real sense of the term. A poet is a man who speaks to a man and whatever Vālmīki has said he has said as a man to a man. Then again good poetry is the criticism of life and Vālmīki's poetry is the true criticism of life, based on emotions recollected in tranquility. Furthermore, a true poet does not confine himself to anything which is personal or local; he transcends all narrowness and his creation becomes impersonal or universal. The characters, the style and the theme which he relates become, as it were, the characters, the style and the theme of all ages. And bearing these characteristics the epic composed by Vālmīki some 2000 years ago, touches the chord of human heart even today and the poet has become the soul of all ages. The characters of the epic had the power to arrest the mind, the theme of the epic had the essence

A STUDY ON THE RAMAYANAS

of Indian philosophy and life supported by enchantment and romanticism and the style was ornate and grandiose having the sonority of the sea. Imbued with these traits the epic attained popularity specially when it was sung among the privileged classes of the Indian society and among the laity by the bards (the Chārans or the Bhāṭs). The Rāma legend has flexibility in speaking of peoples having refined tastes and culture, whereas the Mahābhārata was rigid in delineating the incidents of crude peoples. But, as regards philosophy both the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata aim at the same dictum, that the wicked should be punished and the virtuous should be rewarded and that crime never pays.

Another interesting point to note is that the period when Vālmīki lived had ushered a new phase in the sub-continent, a phase which was inculcated with the rigours of Buddhism. There was a growing propensity among the young men of the age to respond to the call from monasteries and the Hindu community was shaken. The Hindus could feel that life in monasteries would mean a severance of all connection wih family life. And Vālmīki, who is believed to live around the 4th century B.C., if not earlier, gave the first emphatic reply to this much dreaded call from the monasteries, by preaching through his epic that there can be no sanctuary as sacred as one's own home. Whatever austerities were followed by the chief characters of the epic it will be noticed that they were all for the sake of domestic ties.²⁰

Poems of war are not unknown in the Rgveda, but for the real cultivation of heroic poetry we get the best early notice from the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa. The Brahmanas sing by day and the Rājanyas, men of noble rank, by night. Elsewhere in Vedic literature we get the phrase 'nārasāmsī,' celebrating men, and very probably it refers to heroic tales or songs. It is classed with gāthā and raibhi in a passage of the Rgveda.²¹

The nārasanisīs were really heroic stories, but we are not certain if they were partly intended for edification or if they were sung frankly for entertainment by the courtiers of a prince. Later on, of course, the instructive side was made prominent, and the singing of these was supposed to conduce to the spiritual well-being of the hearers. This transformation is explained by the term 'Ephemerism', by which it was meant that the kings whose deeds were sung were later elevated to gods or demi-gods. Once they had been made divine, the story of their prowess would naturally be taken to have a spiritual import; and a work originally intended for entertainment may easily have become in later times

a sacred thing. The last stage of narrative poetry is the stage in which the heroic interest has been completely thrust into the background, and didacticism looms large. The works are capable of indefinite expansion, but expansion always means the addition of new didactic material.

With the \$\bar{A}di-R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana\$ however we are on a different plane. There is no heroic nucleus as in the \$Mah\bar{a}bh\bar{a}rata\$ and even if we omit the first and the last Book, the story takes up a considerable length of time. As a consequence there is not the same fullness of detail nor the same wealth of episodes. Ministrelsy or oral transmission is not prominent at all; and the story proceeds in the regular narrative fashion, not in the form of questions and answers, as so often in the \$Mah\bar{a}bh\bar{a}rata\$. The style too has often the elaborate ornamentation of later times and we have high-flown descriptions of natural surroundings as in the \$Sakuntal\bar{a}\$ episode of the \$Mah\bar{a}bh\bar{a}rata\$.

The interest of the story is in the fortunes of individuals. In the fight the contending parties represent different races as well, for the contest between the monkeys and the Rākṣaas is probably one between two races of lower stage of civilization; one of which being aided by the more cultured inhabitants of the North wins the victory. It might be that this fight has a deep historical significance, but surely the human interest in it is very small. The description of fighting has not the same appeal as in the Mahābhārata, for not only is the method of warfare often very primitive but the accounts are generally much more vague even in the Mahābhārata.

Again in the Rāmāyaṇa, speeches take up a much smaller portion of the whole and even though there are occasionally expression of heroic sentiments, the lust of glory and the passions for war are markedly absent. The atmosphere of semi-savage heroism which is for us one of the chief attractions of the Mahābhārata has, in the Rāmāyaṇa, given place to one sophisticated sentimentality. In place of expressions of undaunted courage and of defiance even of the gods we have helpless lamentations and pious moralizings from the hero. Faced with disaster, Rāma does not show us the burning passion for vengeance, but wastes his time in weak complaints and religious reflections.

Vālmīki has tried to reproduce the atmosphere of the heroic past; he has taken characters from old heroic legends and attempted to make them act according to heroic standards. But his heroes are animated with the ideas and sentiments of his own age and these do not at all harmonize with the deeds of blood

they perform. It is as with Vergil's Aeneas or Tennyson's Arthur; when the hero slays one of his opponents, it looks very much like murder. The impression produced from the whole work is one of artifice, of what we have called a 'literary' as opposed to the authentic epic or what the Sanskrit critic would call a 'kāvya' as opposed to 'Itihāsa-purāṇa'.

In discussing the history of ministrelsy, we have occasion to show that heroic poetry started with bardic songs about events almost contemporaneous. The historical basis was there, but the imagination of successive generations of bards played on it and added elements which can, by no means, be termed historical.²²

The fate of Indian heroic stories has been different from that of Teutonic or Greek ones mainly on religious sentiment; the dead heroes were given a sacred nature and the story of their deeds was regarded as part of their scriptures. So the difficulty in detecting the historical basis has been doubted, for not only the usual unhistorical elements of legend have been introduced, but the whole spirit of the narrative has been changed, its interest being no longer in the straightforward account of the deeds of prowess, of the 'gathering-in of fame' but in the advancement of some religious cults, some theological dogmas.²³

Jain poets wrote the saga of Rāma in detail either in Sanskrit or Prakrit. They were Vimala Suri, Ravisena, Jinasena, Gunabhadra, Svayambhu, Puspadatta and others. Their Rāmāyana stories were composed between the 4th and 12th century A.D. Certain myths were incorporated in these compositions, e.g. the association of Vidyādharas (in some places Yakṣas or Nāgas) with the Rāvaṇa group and the basis of these myths is associated with the Himalaya.²⁴ The abode of Kuvera was in Alakā in the Himalaya, and Rāvaṇa was settled in Lankā.²⁵ Rāvaṇa was also once the inhabitant of the Himalaya, Rāvaṇa had ten heads (daśagrīva) and not twenty as he is commonly known to have.²⁶

We have already discussed above about Vimala Suri's Padmacarita. This work is sometimes called Padmapurāṇa or Rāmāyaṇa-purāṇa and is said to be composed by Vimala in A.D. 4, according to his own statement. Although some scholars assign it to the 4th or 5th century A.D. the general contention is that it was composed during the second half of the 1st century A.D. This work shows acquaintance with the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, but contains particular details which have nothing to do with the Jaina outlook and which, consequently, are of great value in studying the basic Rāma legend that has been worked out by various authors in different ways. In this work Rāvaṇa is not a monster,

nor Hanumāna (Maruti, son of Marut, Vāyu) a monkey, they are both Vidyādharas, a class of semi-divine beings.²⁷ Vimala Suri's religious sermons have a lofty didactic tone, and he also tells

many an episode of romantic and legendary interest.

Svayambhu's Rāmāyaṇa has five cantos: Vijjahar (Vidyādhara), Ujjha (yodhyā), Sundara, Juppha (Yuddha) and Uttara. Vidyādhara deals with the pre-history of Rāvaṇa. Rāma's mother's name is Aparājitā and Bharata's Suprabhā. Janaka had a twin, Bhāmaṇḍal and Sītā. Bhāmaṇḍal was stolen, when a child. When he grew up he was inclined to marry Sītā. Sītā's svayamvara is somewhat of a different nature. Śūrpaṇakha is here Chandraṇakha. Bāli is here a learned hypocrite under the name of Sugrīva. Rāma by killing him got the three daughters of Dadhimukha married.

This Jaina work further states that once Daśaratha had to face an encounter from thirty-five kings. When he was captured by his opponents the ministers advised the queens to flee the battlefield. The other queens left, but Kaikeyī remained firm and fought herself to the last and saved the king. Daśaratha out of gratitude agreed to grant her boons on this account. It was through Kaikeyī's intrigue that Rāma was banished by Daśaratha for 12 years and not 14 years which we find in the Vālmīki

Rāmāyana.

During the period of banishment Rāma had to lose Sītā and when he was very much depressed at the loss of Sītā Laksmana consoled him by saying, Ajja nārihasi soium itthinimittam/ jai vā mariumichasi to kim sattaparāyaya payattam na karosi// 'Arya, you should not lament on account of a woman. And if you want to die, why you are not trying to defeat the enemy.' Here Rāma is somewhat weak and Laksmana is supposed to be brave and more considerate. It was Laksmana again who killed Rāvana and brought the war to terms and took Sītā to Rāma. After Rāvaņa was cremated, Vibhīsana became king of Ariñjaya (Lankā). Then Rāma, Laksmana and Sītā returned to Ayodhyā alongwith Sugriva. It is further said that with the help of Vibhīṣaṇa and Sugrīva Rāma conquered the half of India. Thus . neither in Lanka nor in India Rama could win the battles with his ewn might, on the contrary he was on the background. In Lanka Laksmana was the real fighter and in India the fighters were Vibhīsana and Sugrīva. In India, therefore, the Aryans took the help of the Vanaras and the Raksasas to establish their supremacy. In the Buddhist Jātaka, Rāma is the main actor, Laksmana, played the secondary rôle. There Rāma is peaceful,

patient, wise and mendicant, that is, he imbibed all qualities so very vital for a Bodhisattva. In Jaina works Laksmana is the

real hero, Rāma is a gentlemanly man, so to say.

In Dravidian language the oldest Rāmāyana is that of Kamban, known as the Tamil Rāmāyana. Opinions differ about the age of Kamban. According to some he belonged to the 9th century A.D., while others think that the 10th century is the probable date of his appearance. Kamban came from Tirubanjhudur of the Tanjore district. Sadayappa, a Zamindar, was his great admirer who made people know about Kamban's great qualities. Tradition says that Kamban was contemporary of Ottakutar, a famous poet of the court of the Cola king. Ottakutar had a tremendous influence on the literary persons of his time and his say was always accepted till the appearance of Kamban. Kamban by virtue of his wide knowledge captivated all including the King and became the court-poet.28

Some diviations from the Vālmīki Rāmāyana can be noticed in the Kamban Rāmāyana. In the Vālmīki Rāmāyana Rāma, prior to his departure for forest-life, met Dasaratha who called him inside his apartment and said 'Kaikeyi has played trick in getting two boons granted. You do not agree to the decision and make vourself king of Avodhya'. In Kamban Rama, even knowing that his father was inside his room, did not meet the latter for taking leave. He paid his respect to Dasaratha by turning his face towards the room and paying salute to Kaikeyi he went to the room of Kausalya. In this deviation Kamban's art is revealed. He knew that the pang of separation would be more acute if Rāma would go to the forest without bidding adieu his father. Then Dasaratha loved his son dearly but he also had the love for truth and in course of action the filial love gave way to the greater love for truth.

In the Vālmīki Rāmāyana Sītā does not wear by herself the garment made of leaves, it is Kaikeyi who makes her wear it by force. When Sitā feels the coarseness of the cloth she is somewhat perturbed, she begins to tremble like a deer captured in a net. For this heartless deed both Vasistha and Dasaratha rebuked Kaikeyi, but the latter, however, pays no heed. In the Kamban Sītā wears the coarse cloth by herself and with great pleasure. She came out and stood firm beside Rāma. And in this way Kamban gives a dramatic touch to the episode of Sītā's following Rāma

to the forest.

In the Ayodhyākānda when Rāma went to accept forest life leaving the city of Ayodhya, Kamban feels that the quest for God

is best possible when one leaves the city which is full of contamination. Kamban's Rāma, therefore, asks Sumanta to go back and look after Bharata, thus leaving him in the midst of forest in peace and tranquility. Sumanta comes back and says, 'aisā kahā unhone, jo, śāstroñse chhupkar, man meñ rahane lage': He said thus, and taking himself off from the scriptures, he decided to stay on in the forest. According to Kamban the śāstras (scriptures) stand in the way of finding out the truth i.e. God.

Then Kamban's Rāma is somewhat different from Vālmīki's Rāma. The former is a sage and vegetarian; he thinks that vegetarianism is a special virtue and trait of culture. Possibly Kamban himself was a vegetarian. When Niṣāda Guhaka prays for taking fish, his request hurts the feelings of the sage-Rāma because this would dishonour the hermits. Still Rāma, the embodiment of love, utters that as the present is soaked with love from Guhaka the hermits may accept the offering. Later Rāma takes Guhaka as his brother. He says abhī tak hum chār bhāi the, aur ab hum pānc bhāi ho gae/ kyā bhrātṛtva kī bhī koī sīmā hai, prem sankhyā ko baḍhā detā hai//: Uptill now we were four brothers, from now we have become five/ Is there any boundary for brotherhood, love increases the numbers//.

In the Ayodhyākāṇḍa of Vālmīki Bharata went on chariot to meet Rāma and bring him back; in Kamban he went on foot. In Kamban's Kumbhakarṇa also there is a note of diviation. In the dying speech Kumbhakarṇa expresses his own nobility and wide feelings. Lying in a pool of blood Kumbhakarṇa prays to Rāma, 'My younger brother is a firm follower of righteousness, which is the outcome of law. He is somewhat different from his own race and colour. Oh, the protector of the world, my brother has taken refuge in you and seeks your protection. Merciless Rāvaṇa would not offer him shelter, even though he is his own brother. Rāvaṇa would kill him at sight. Please know that during the whole course of fight he will be with you, your brother and Hanumāna.' Thus we find that Kamban's Kumbhakarṇa is much more brave, valiant, wide-hearted and noble than Vālmīki's Kumbhakarṇa.

Kamban's Kaikeyi is also more refined than Vālmīki's Kaikeyi. She is beautiful, cultured, noble and wide-hearted. She has no scruple, and finds no difference between Bharata, here own son and Rāma, the son of the co-wife. It is the master tactic of Mantharā that could turn her to go against Rāma. But in this context, Kamban has dramatised the whole situation. Thus Nature becomes furious at the evil deed of Kaikeyi. Night

changes into day. The coolness of night gives way to the daring light of the day. The sun, as if getting angry at Kaikeyi's committing a sin, rises from the east with reddened eyes.

In the Yuddhakānda also Kamban presented a dramatic turn of the whole situation. Rāvaṇa gets impatient at the loss of his brave son, Atikāya. Atikāya's mother, who belongs to a sophisticated family, is highly disillusioned and rebukes the angry but guilty Rāvaṇa. She cries out: 'kyā tum dikhlāoge mujhe merā pyarā beṭā jo thā merī ānkhoñ kā tārā.'29 The queen accuses Rāvaṇa for his infatuation for Sītā and curses him for inviting troubles on his account 'Sītā ke kāraṇ honewālī āpattiyāñ kam nahīn haiñ'.

Rāvaṇa then sends his much braver son Indrajit. Indrajit has a brahmāstra which can emit poisonous gas. He lets that weapon loose and with its poisonous gas both Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa become unconscious. Indrajit however takes them to be dead. Hanumāna under advice of Jāmbabān brings medicine by use of which both the brothers come back to sense. Next morning when Indrajit finds them alive he gets unnerved for his failure. Lakṣmaṇa, however, cuts down Indrajit's head by an arrow of half-moon shape. Rāvaṇa gets furious and decides to kill Sītā, the root cause of all disasters. Mahodar dissuades Rāvaṇa not to commit such an act which might jeopardise his grand name and fame. At his request Rāvaṇa abstains himself from the heinous deed and is maddened with the spirit of fight with his opponents.

Another difference in Kamban is noticed when he describes about Rāma's coming back to Ayodhyā after 14 years. Bharata as Rāma's representative was ruling the kingdom. He does not intend to continue even for a single moment if Rāma does not come back at the appointed hour. At that time Bharata's younger brother, Satrughna, reaches there. Bharata says to him, 'Today is the scheduled day when Rāma has to come back. He has not yet returned. I will now kill myself. Before doing so I pray to you to give him back the kingdom when he comes back.' Satrughna, who is a silent character in Vālmīki, speaks only for once in Kamban. The speech is full of thought, alliteration and exuberance: 'kyonki jo gaye the way samaypar wapis nahin aye, alagthalag darsak ke samān kyā mujhe besarm hokar is rajya par sāsan karna parega': Because he who went did not come in time; should I have to rule being a silent detached observer as a shameless person.

For Kamban devotion is more than argument: 'tark kī apekṣā

bhakti adhik hai'. God is the part. He is also the whole. Part is his incarnation, the whole is his absolutism. He has compared the dryness of desert with the heads of two persons-those who search God and those who are prostitutes. He who is in the quest of divinity frees himself from all passions and desires and the prostitutes who sell their body are also above passions. How wittily Kamban has brought the two opposites on the same plane. To Kamban life has a meaning, it is not a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing; it signifies something.

Another interesting Rāmāyana is the Rāmakathā written in Khotanese language in verse around the 9th century A.D. Altogether there a little more than 750 ślokas, there are gaps at intervals. This Rāmāyana must have been composed by Buddhists because in the beginning and in the end there is Bodhisattva

element.

There was a Brāhmaṇa who worshipped Mahādeva for 12 years and received a boon from the god that in all deeds he would be successful. The Brahmana got married and began to lead a happy life. Now, there was a mighty king, Daśaratha by name; he had another name 'Sahasravāhu'. Once on hunting he stole the cow of that Brāhmaṇa. The Brāhmaṇa with his son Paraśurāma lived on begging. When Paraśurāma grew up, he went to a mountain and began penance for 12 years and received siddhi from Brahmā. Then Paraśurāma with his axe went out to take revenge on Dasaratha for his father's chastisement. The two fought a duel and Dasaratha was killed. Thereafter, Parasurama began to roam about in different countries for uplifting the Brāhmanas by killing the kings (evidently the Ksatriyas).

Daśaratha had two sons, Rāma and Laksmana. In order to save the two sons from Paraśurāma's fury their mother hid them under the earth for 12 years. The two brothers grew up and went out in search of the killer of their father and they could find Paraśurāma at last in a cave of a mountain. Rāma killed him and the whole Jambudvipa came under the sway of the two

brothers.

A daughter was born to Daśagrīva, the king of the Brāhmanas, by his chief queen. (Here Dasagrīva, if he is Rāvaņa, is a Brāhmaṇa, and not a Rākṣasa). Astrologers read the horoscope of the girl and prophesied that the kingdom of Dasagrīva would be put to ruin by this daughter. On Dasagriva's order the newlyborn babe was thrown into the river in a casket. One hermit found the casket. He took the baby and brought her up. Here there is a gap in the book. Possibly the hermit is Vālmīki and

it is he who reared up Sītā in her infancy.

Once Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa reached the forest where Sītā was staying. Both of them fell in love with Sītā. They begged Sītā from the hermit and kept her at a place marking a circle around. There was none, not even the gods, who could cross beyond the circle. One day during the absence of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa Daśagrīva, while flying through air, saw the beautiful lady on the ground and came down; he could not however cross the circle. A vulture was on guard. It attacked Daśagrīva, but it was killed in the duel. Daśagrīva then appeared in the guise of a beggar Brāhmaṇa. When Sītā reached him for giving alms Daśagrīva caught her by force and took her to the island of Ceylon.

In this part the theme has absolute affinity with that of the $V\bar{a}lm\bar{i}ki$ $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana$, the difference is only in name and in the

parenthood of Sītā and the identity of Daśagrīva.

On returning home the brothers could not find Sītā. They reached the land of the Vanaras in search of her. There they saw a mighty old monkey and realising its superb strength they went away. Autumn came. For 12 years the brothers went on searching Sītā. They saw again two monkeys. They were brothers and closely resemble each other. The name of one was Nanda and that of the other was Sugriva. Nanda agreed to help Rāma in his quest with its large army; in return Rāma promised to help him to defeat its brother. Nanda took a small mirror and hung it round its neck. Rāma could then easily distinguish the two and in the duel Sugrīva was killed by Rāma's arrow. Nanda told his monkey-army that if they would fail to bring the news of Sītā within a week, he would pluck out their eyes. Seven days passed by. None could bring any news of Sītā. There was a she-monkey, named Laphush; she said that she had heard the birds chatter that soon they would relish the eyes of many monkeys as the latter did not know that Dasagrīva had carried away Sītā to the island of Lanka. Nanda got this information and asked the monkeys to prepare a bridge to reach the island and to destroy the bridge so that nobody could flee. He then proceeded towards the town of Lanka. There was a great uproar. Dasagriva learnt about the entry of Rāma. Here a portion is missing.

The Rākṣasas were routed. The wise ministers advised Daśagrīva to release Sītā. But Daśagrīva paid no heed. Ministers fled. Daśagrīva began penance. Rāma entered Laṅkā with the Vānara army. Daṣagrīva was not successful in his penance. He

could realize that his defeat was near at hand. He took the venom of snake, mixed it with butter and rubbed it on the edge of his arrow. He then hurled the arrow towards Rama. The arrow struck Rāma's forehead and Rāma fainted. Jīvaka, the doctor (who was famous when the Buddha was alive), was called. Jīvaka said that life-giving nectar (amrta sanjīvanī) was to be brought from the Himalaya. Nanda went to bring the medicine, but as he forgot the name of the tree, he uprooted the whole mountain and brought it there (cf. Hanumana's uplifting the mount Gandhamādana in the Vālmīki Rāmāyana). By taking the root Rāma regained his sense and was again on his legs. But in the meanwhile Daśagriva took Sītā on his lap, and showed, from the air, that Rāma was lying unconscious. It is interesting to note in this connection the whole scene, which is very much similar to that delineated in the Vālmīki Rāmāyana, of the Khotanese Rāmāyana is in the Northern India.

Astrologers read the situation and said that the vulnerable spot in Daśagrīva's body was the toe of his right foot. Daśagrīva was challenged by Rāma to appear and was asked to show his right toe. As Daśagrīva showed his toe Rāma pierced it with his arrow. Daśagrīva fell down. No such vulnerable spot was referred to in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa. Daśagrīva then prayed to Rāma for granting him his life by saying, "I will pay you tax". Rāma did not take his life. Here also we can notice the deviation. Furthermore Daśagrīva's reference to payment of tax is interesting to note. Does this indicate the payment of tribute by the vanquished non-Aryans to the victorious Aryans? The sparing of Daśagrīva (Rāvaṇa)'s life by Rāma is another point of deviation with the Vālmīki Rāmāyana.

Then both brothers spent with Sītā for one hundred years. But unrest spread among the subjects. Lakṣmaṇa tried to pacify them by offering gold and silver. Here Lakṣmaṇa appears to be very practical to purchase³⁰ people by money and herein also there is a difference with the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, in which we never get any reference of such purchase of people. Sītā knew that the subjects were dissatisfied on account of her. In the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa this cause of unrest of the people of Ayodhyā was known to Rāma himself. Sītā of the Khotanese Rāmāyaṇa made Rāma aware of this and herself entered into the womb of

the Mother Earth.

Rāma reached the beach of the sea and by burning collyrium and rape-seed he drove the Nāgas away from the sea and returned to Jambudvīpa i.e. India. No such incident was referred to by

Vālmiki. It might be that during this time the Nāgas were powerful on the sea and were threatening to invade the land. By defeating Daśagrīva Rāma was able to clear one menace encountered by the Aryans (Buddhists) and by driving away the Nāgas he made the Aryans (Buddhists) free from another menace. In the meanwhile as referred to in the Khotanese Rāmāyaṇa Daśagrīva came to the Buddha and was baptized.

In Sanskrit the important works on Rāmakathā are Jaina Rāmāyana by Hemachandra (12th century A.D.), Rāmapurāna by Jinadasa (15th century A.D.) and Rāmacarit by Padmavijaya (16th century A.D.). In Apabhramsa Satyadeva wrote Paumacāriya (8th century A.D.). Nāgachandra's Rāmāyana belonged to the 11th century A.D. while the Rāmāyaņa of Kumudendu was of the 18th century A.D. In the 15th century A.D. Rāmavijayacarit was written by Devappya. Another form of Rāmakathā can be found in Gunabhadra's Uttarapurāna (9th century A.D.). Basing the subject-matter of the Vālmīki Rāmāyana some other works were written, but in theme the importance lies more on the aspect of love (srngara) than that of the sojourn of Rāma. In the Setubandha and the Bhattikāvya this love aspect was confined to the Rāksasa clans, but in the Jānakī-harana the amours of Rāma and Sītā were given prominence, as we find in the descriptions of Kālidāsa's Kumārasambhava. In Abhinanda's Rāmacarit (9th century A.D.) the incidents, based on the Vālmīki Rāmāyana, are from the rainy resort of Rāma and Laksmana to the killing of Kumbha and Nikumbha. Rāvana's play of love is a special attraction of this work. Bhasa wrote two dramas on Rāma; they are Pratimānāṭaka and Abhisekanāṭaka. Probably these were written on the same line as adopted by Kālidāsa. Pratimānātaka31 there are seven acts which present the themes of Ayodhyā and Aranya sections of the Vālmīki Rāmāyana. Kaikeyī and Bharata are the main characters and the tragic sentiment has been fused in delineating the death-scene of Dasaratha. Knowing the death of Dasaratha a certainty in consequence of a curse of a sage Kaikeyi, under Vasistha's advice, saves Rāma from the resultant plight by banishing the latter. In Abhisekanāṭaka the poet has shown sympathy towards the two non-Aryan characters, Rāvana and Bāli,

Bhavabhūti wrote Mahāvīracarit during the first half of the 8th century A.D. and in this work Rāvaṇa's hatred towards Rāma has become the prime theme. Rāvaṇa became enamoured of Sītā's beauty. He proposed to marry Sītā through a messenger and when Sītā refused Rāvaṇa took recourse of revenge.

Uttararāmacarit³² is not only the best work of Bhavabhūti it is the best drama of the Rāmakāvya. The ending is comedy and this is Bhavabhūti's originality and Sītā, at the end, returns to Ayodhya with Rāma. Dharinaga's Kundamālā (9th century A.D.) follows Uttararāmacarita. Rāma notices one Kundamālā in whom Rāma could see his own beloved. Mayurāja wrote Udattarāghava (8th century A.D.) which was not published. In South India Saktibhadra wrote Āścaryacudāmaṇi (9th century A.D.) which deals with incidents from Sūrpaṇakhā's appearance to Sītā's fireordeal. Mahādeva's son Jayadeva wrote Pratannarāghava (12/13th century A.D.) in which have been dealt the incidents from Sītā's svayamvara to Yuddhakāṇḍa. In Maithilikalyān's Hastimalla (13th century A.D.) Rāma's courtship with Sītā is described in four acts.

Rāmāyanas were also composed in different parts of the country. In Assam Mādhava Kandali wrote his Vālmīki Rāmāyana in the 14th century A.D. Durgāvar's Gīti-Rāmāyana is worthy of mention. In Orissa Jagmohan Rāmāyana, Balarāmadasa Rāmāyana and Dandi Rāmāyana (on dandi chhand) were composed in around 1500 A.D. Two other famous works, Saraladas' Vilankarāmāyana (15th century A.D.) and a later work by the name of Vicitrarāmāyana are worthy of mention. In Gujarat Malan wrote Sītāsvayamvara or Rāmavivāha in the 15th century A.D. Nowadays the best known Rāmāyana in Gujarat is that of Giridhardas (19th century A.D.). The oldest Rāmāyana in Maharastra is that of Eknath (16th century A.D.) known as the Bhavarth-Rāmāyana. In Telugu three works are important. Ranganātha-rāmāyana written by one Budhuraj in the 12th century and dedicated to a General Ranganatha by name. The second one is Bhaskararāmāyana, another stylistic composition, written in the 14th century A.D. And the third was written by Molla, a female potter, the Mollā-Rāmāyana in the 16th century A.D., which is very popular. In Malayalam there is no original work. Basing on the Yuddhakanda of the Valmiki Ramayana Ramacarita was composed in the 14th century A.D. Later two translations of the Vālmīki Rāmāyana were brought out, Kannassa-rāmāyana and Keral-Burma-rāmāyana. But the most famous is the translation of the Adhyātma-rāmāyaṇa composed in the 17th century⁸³ A.D.

As we have seen elsewhere that the Rāmāyaṇa had a deep impact on countries lying beyond India, we can find Rāmāyaṇas in these countries. In the Chinese language Anamajātakam and Daśarathakathānam were translated in the 3rd and the 5th century respectively. Besides these two works, the oldest is the

Tibbati-rāmāyaṇa, composed probably in the 8th century A.D. This work has affinity with the Bṛhatkathā and Gunabhadra's

Uttarapurāna.

There exist several recensions—early, medieval and comparatively recent—of the Rāmāyaṇa in Java both in verse and in prose episodes of the Rāmāyaṇa survive to this day in the Javanese shadow-plays (the Wayang) and stories which are still very popular with the people. The Rāma literature in the Archipelago displays however such marked divergences from the epic of Vālmīki that until lately it was assumed that the Javanese had taken great liberties with the Rāmāyaṇa. But scholars are beginning to think that the Javanese may have got their traditions of Rāma from other Indian sources of the hero's exploits besides

Vālmīki's poem.84

At Prambanam in Java, the entire story of the Rāmāyana is carved on stone. Most of the themes of dance dramas and shadow-plays, the Wajang Wong and the Wajang Kuilt are taken from episodes in the Rāmāyana. The lexicon Amaramālā, which refers to King Jitendra of the Sailendra dynasty, and the Vajrāyana text Sang Hyang Kamahanikan, a part of which is called Sang Hyang Kamahayanan Mantrayana, belong to a period prior to the beginning of the 10th century to which the old Javanese Rāmāyaņa is usually assigned. There are two forms of the Rāmāyana in Java. One is Kakavin, based on the Bhattikāvya, composed in the 12th century A.D. And the recent Hikāyat Seri Rāma which is more popular, written in the 15th century. All modern dramas in Java are on the line of this work. Javanese Rāmāyana, the first and perhaps the best of Kakavins, was probably composed about the first quarter of the 10th century by Jogisvara, whose real name, according to Balinese tradition, seems to be Rājakusuma or Kusumavicitra. The text contains 2,274 stanzas, divided into 26 cantos and written in various Sanskrit metres. The major part of the text is a translation of the Bhattikāvya. The story broadly follows Valmīki's Rāmāyana, but ends with the return of Rāma, Sītā, Laksmana and their entourage to Ayodhya.

In an inscription of Yasovarman (889-909 A.D.) the construction of the new capital Yasodharapura (Angkor Thom) is thus referred to in words having a double meaning: 'He who defended Kambupuri (the capital of Kambuja), impreganable (Ayodhyā), of terrifying aspect (Vibhīṣaṇa), with the aid of good counsellors (with Sumantra as his friend) and with prosperity (Sītā) as its ornament, like the descendant of Raghu.'85 The

Hemasrnga-giri, at present known as Ta keo, was constructed by Jayavarman V of Kambuja (968-1000 A.D.) and is one of the finest pyramidal temples of Cambodia. Among the Rāma reliefs, found on the walls of the highest gallery, may be mentioned the interview between Rāma and Laksmana and Sugrīva, the duel between Sugriva and Bāli, Sītā in the grove of Aśoka trees handing the jewel to Hanumana battle scenes in which Hanumana plays the chief part, the ten-headed Ravana in a chariot drawn by lions facing Rāma who is carried by Hanumāna, the ordeal of Sītā and Rāma and Sītā enthroned. Angkor Vat, the most famous Vaisnava temple of Cambodia, was built in the first half of the 12th century. Among the innumerable bas reliefs, which adorn its galleries are several scenes from the Rāmāyana such as Rāma pursuing Mārīca, the death of Kabandha, the alliance of Rāma with Sugriva, the duel between Sugriva and Bali, Hanumana finding Sītā in Lankā, the Lankā battle-field, etc., ending with the return of Rāma and Sītā in the aerial chariot of Puspaka.

There is an interesting chronicle of the Anamites which describes the people of Champa (South Annam), who were their mortal enemies, as descendants of monkeys and cite the following tradition to corroborate this.36 In ancient times, beyond the frontiers of Annam, there was a kingdom the king of which was known as the king of demons, called Dasanana. To the north of this realm was the country of Ho Ton Tinh where reigned the King Daśaratha. The son of this king, of the name of Ch'ung-Tu, had a wife, the princess Bach-Tinh. She was a peerless beauty. The king of the demons became enamoured of her, invaded the kingdom of Ho Ton Tinh, seized the princess and carried her away. The prince Ch'ung-Tu whose anger was roused, put himself at the head of an army of monkeys. The monkeys made a passage for themselves by bringing the sea with mountains which they tore off from their positions. The kingdom of Diennghiem was conquered and the king of demons slain. The people of Ho Ton Tinh were of the monkey race and the Chams (the people of Champa) are their descendants. Commenting on the above one critic says that the Anamite writer supposes that the events (of the Rāmāyaṇa) took place in Champa and this is a reason for believing that the story need not be traced back to the Dasaratha Jataka in the Chinese Buddhist Canon; it is probably the distant echo of that which was once the national epic of Champa and which is now lost. And there was a Rāmāyana in the Cham language. 37

Unlike Java and Bali Cambodia has a very scanty vernacular literature dating from early times. This is rather strange as

Cambodian epigraphy is the richest in southeast Asia in ancient and medieval times. Of the very few literary survivals of the past Rām-Ker or Rām-Kerti (Rāma-kīrti) is certainly the most important. It has original features. Two features of Rām-Ker are to be specially noted. The first is the deep impress of Buddhism. Rāma is here a Bodhisattva. The second feature is the Cambodian author's indebtedness to the Javanese and Malay versions of the Rāmāyaṇa. Baby Sītā floating on the waters when rescued by Janaka, sea-fishes trying to destroy Rāma's bridge on the sea, the episode of the fan with Rāvaṇa's picture in Sītā's hand, Lava the only son of Sītā (Kuśa being a magic creation out of Kuśa grass by Vālmīki), the combat between Rāma and Lava, these are some of the instances of the poet's borrowings from Indonesian sources.

In the Javanese and Malay versions the baby Sītā, really the daughter of Rāvaṇa, is thrown into the sea being of evil omen to her family and is saved by Maharşi Kāla from a watery grave. Such instances are, of course, the indications of the poet's knowledge of Vālmīki's poem.

In the Serat Rāma by Jasadhipura, a work much appreciated in Javanese literary circles, the early history of Rāvaṇa is found which is not given in the Old Javanese poem. The second group is represented by the $R\bar{a}ma$ Kling, the Serat Kāṇḍas and other less known works such as the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yaṇa$ Sasak, $R\bar{a}ma$ Nitis, etc. This group closely appproaches the Malay version of the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yaṇa$. The Malay $Hik\bar{a}yat$ Seri $R\bar{a}ma$ is probably based on the second group and not the first which served the basis.

The Serat Kāṇḍa begins with Adam in Mecca with his sons Abil and Kabil and Satan. We then get a curious association of Noah and Umā. We come next to the account of the births of Viṣṇu and Vāṣukī and Muslim figures disappear. In this work Rāma is called Bhārgava, Lakṣmaṇa Murshaka and Sītā Sinta; Janaka is Kāla and Jaṭāyu Jintaya; Hanumāna is Anumān and he is the son of Rāma and Sītā who are temporarily metamorphosed into apes; Hanumāna loses his tail which he recovers in the sea of sand. Rāvaṇa is buried under a mountain. Then follows the interesting episode of the fan, with Rāvaṇa's picture on it, which Sītā unwillingly handles. This leads to estrangement between Rāma and Sītā. The couple are however reconciled at the hermitage of Kāla, i.e. Janaka. Towards the end we have the marriage of the daughter of Indrajit with Buta-Lava (i.e. Lava). Dinjayapura is mentioned as the capital of Lava. Finally, Sītā

consents to be cremated with Rāma on condition that in the next life she would be his sister.38

The difference beween the conclusion of the Serat Kāṇḍa and Vālmīki's Uttarakāṇḍa is so great that the former must be ascribed to a different source altogether. There is, therefore, every likelihood that other versions besides that of Vālmīki are the basis for the Javanese divergences. The fame of Vālmīki has perhaps made up forget that there was also other, formerly wellknown, accounts of the life of Rāma.

In the Serat Kāṇḍa there is a combination of Muhammedan tales and of the deeds of Rāma. In the third canto, Siva is mentioned as a descendant of Adam. In the Serat Kāṇḍa the story of Rāma forms an organic whole with early legends of Javanese dynasties. These Javanese texts may be taken as Javanese Purāṇas working up local legends with the orthodox Indian traditions.

The Malay Rāmāyaṇa, known as Hikāyat Seri Rāma, has two versions in which plotsam and jetsam from the east, west and south-west of India were gathered to produce the proto-type of the Malay texts. Some of the Indian elements arrived in Malay in the 12th century and might have woven into the texture of Hikāyat Seri Rāma between the 12th and 17th centuries. Some works of the 15th century, such as Hikāyat Iskandar Dhu'l-Karnain and Hikayat Ami Hamzah, also betray the influence of the Rāmāyaṇa as well as the Mahābhārata through its Javanese version known as Bhārata-Yuddha. The shadow plays of Malayasia drew their themes from the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, and they were presented by invoking the deities of the Hindu pantheon like Siva and Gaṇeśa as well as figures of the two great Indian epics like Rāma, Rāvaṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa, Indrajit and Arjuna.

By examining the sources it is noticed that a great part of the Malay $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana$ consists of old native legends which have nothing to do with the story of $R\bar{a}ma$. $R\bar{a}vana$ is banished by his father, put on board a ship and finds himself at last in Serandip (Ceylon). He leads the rigorous life of an ascetic for 12 years at the end of which period Adam appears before him. Rāvana requests Adam to intercede for him. Such is the beginning and then go through what seems to us a strangely distorted account of the familiar story of $R\bar{a}ma$.

In this perspective the question naturally arises how far these differences are local in origin or whether they can be traced to different versions of the Rāma tradition in India itself. In the

Malay versions Daśaratha's first wife is found in a bamboo thicket and according to the Serat Kāṇḍa the second wife is also found in a bamboo grove. In Indian folk lore also there are some instances like this and it may not be Indonesian origin. The part which Balia Dari (Kaikeyī) plays is different from that which she plays in the Rāmāyaṇa. She held up with her hand Daśaratha's litter when it was breaking. In the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa there is also a mention of the breaking of the litter in addition to Kaikeyī's healing the wound of Daśaratha.⁴¹ In the Malay version, Rāma, when quite young, teases a hunch-backed woman (Manthara). In Ksemendra's Rāmāyaṇa, Kathāsarita Mañjari, Rāma's rough treatment of Mantharā led to her action against him.

Again in the Malay version and in the Serat Kāṇḍa Sītā is apparently Rāvaña's daughter by Mandodarī (really in both of these works she is the daughter of Daśaratha and Mandodarī). As soon as she is born, she is put in a box and thrown into the sea. Janaka (Kāla in Javanese) finds the box, while performing his morning ablutions, takes out Sītā and brings her up. In the Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa Nārada curses Lakṣmī that she is to be born as a Rākṣasī. In the Siamese version also Sītā is the daughter of Rāvaṇa. In a Ceylonese tale Sītā is born of the blood of ascetics collected by Rāvaṇa. In the Uttarapurāṇa of the Jainas, Sītā is also the daughter of Rāvaṇa.

In the Malay version we find Laksmana leading an ascetic life (without sleeping or partaking any food) for 12 years just as in the Bengali version of Krttivasa. The abduction of Rama in the Pātāla (the underground world) occurs in the Malay version as well as in the Bengali and Gujarati Rāmāyana. 42 In a Punjab story Machandanāth is the son of Hanumāna by a fish-queen whom the monkey-chief weds on his visit to Pātāla in quest of Rāma.43 A son of Hanumana by a princess of subterranean regions is mentioned also in the Malay version. Most of the divergences in the Javanese and Malay accounts of the Lanka-kanda can probably be deduced from Indian sources. In the Malay version Rāvaņa falls when Rāma shoots off his small head (he had ten heads) behind his right ear. Then again Rāvaņa is immortal and cannot die. The episode of Sītā and the fan with Rāvaṇa's picture, which we have already referred to in the Serat Kāṇḍa, occurs in the Chandravali where the same story is told of Kaikeyi's daughter Kakuā.44

Kuśa is in the Ceylonese as well as in the Malay versions created out of Kuśa grass by Vālmīki when the real child is found

to be missing. The account of the fighting which takes place between Rāma and his sons (without their knowing each other) is to be found in Bengal as well as in Malay archipelago.

Now the question is in what relation do these variations stand to Vālmīki's epic. Some of these stories may be older than the epic itself and cerainly they are cruder. In the Malay Hikāyat Seri Rāma Sītā is only apparently Rāvaṇa's daughter while in some of the earlier versions she is Rāvaṇa's real daughter. In Vālmīki's epic there is no relationship between Rāvaṇa and Sītā. Sītā's story has been adapted, to the stage of civilization of the period to which the story belongs. Thus instead of accusing the Javanese of having tampered with the Rāma tradition to suit their own outlook on life, the same charge may be levelled against Vālmīki himself for having given us a refined version of earlier and cruder accounts.

As regards the sources of the Javenese Rāmāyaṇa it was supported by some scholars that the Tamil Rāmāyana might be the basis of the Javanese and Malay versions. But the Tamil Rāmāyana of Kamban follows closely the Rāmāyana of Vālmīki. The popular tales in the Indonesian versions approach closely some of the popular traditions current in Gujrat, Punjab and Bengal. This is interesting. Folklore still existing in Java ascribes the colonisation of the island by immigrants from Gujrat. This was probably due to the fact that from the 13th century the Gujratis were in Java as merchants, mallahas and sailors. However this does not evince that the Gujratis influenced the earlier tradition of the Javanese. And the divergences of the Indonesian Rāmāyana cannot be attributed to any Gujrati version. There were oral traditions prevalent in the area and these might have been responsible for moulding the Rāmakathā of the Javanese people. According to Stuttenheim, 45 Vālmīki Rāmāyana represents a later and more refined civilization. And this view seems to be justified. It is probable that the Javanese and Malay versions preserve some of the more primitive traditions of the land.

The Rāma tradition is still a living force in the Java of today. The Javanese have so completely assimilated the famous legends that even their foreign origin has been forgotten. For the great mass of population, Rāma and the Pāṇḍavas are truly national

heroes, born and bred in the Isle of Java.

In the Panataran reliefs one thing is to be noted that most of the representations relate to the Vānaras and the Rākṣasas, the non-Aryan tribes. Some of the important scenes are: Hanumāna reaching Lankā, Rāvaṇa and two of his queens seated in the treasury (which looks like a three-storeyed pagoda), Rāvaṇa in the Aśoka grove, Sītā with Trijaṭā and Hanumāna coming down from a tree to meet Sītā. We are then introduced to Rāvaṇa's court, we see messengers kneeling before the king and we get a glimpse of a Rākṣasa plucking out hairs of his beard with pincers. We find Hanumāna breaking the arm of Ākaśa (Rāvaṇa's son), Hanumāna taking a sea-bath after all this toil and trouble and then hurrying back to the fight in the garden of celestial trees. Indrajit then appears mounted on a horse (with $n\bar{a}ga$ heads) with a snakearrow in his bow. Hanumāna is bound in the coils of the $n\bar{a}ga$ - $p\bar{a}śa$ and is led a captive to Rāvaṇa's presence. Hanumāna with his flaming tail sets the palace on fire. Women flee and Rāvaṇa with his queen seeks refuge in his watery palace.

In Prambanan reliefs the technique is Indian where the style of the Panataran reliefs is pure Javanese. Some of the 9th century reliefs of Prambanan are explained by the much later Javanese Rāmāyaṇas of the Serat Kaṇḍā group, but the 14th century Panataran scenes agree closely with the earlier Kakavin group. This is however a paradox. The Panataran art leads to the Wayang, the popular show of modern Java and in this art

the Rāmakathā45a lives in the land.

In Bali, in the dance known as Kejjak the dancers sit in circles, massed together and tell the story of the Rāmāyana beginning with the kidnapping of Sītā by Rāvana. In Burma, the Rāma play is taken from the Siamese and is based on the Dasaratha Jātaka. In the 19th century to celebrate their victory the Siamese Rāmāyana was produced in the Burmese court for the first time. The story is said to have so captivated the people that it was re-written as a romance under the title of Rāma-yagana by their renowned poet U-toe. At Anglor in Cambodia in the great temple of Baphnon erected by Udayadityavarman II, scenes of the Rāmāyana are depicted on the walls in bas-relief. Similarly, one can witness numerous scenes from the Rāmāyana in the 12th century temple at Anglor-Vat. These carvings are stretched together and cover the distance of a mile in area. The last panel of the northern section of the west gallery is the triumph of the sculptor. It represents the struggle of monkeys, allies of Rāma against the giant-soldiers of Ravana, all in a fantas tangle and varied with supreme talent. The monkeys fight naked against the armed giants and tear them to pieces. In the centre is Rāma on the shoulders of Hanumana; further on stands the ten-headed Rāvana on a chariot drawn by ominous-shaped monsters.

The Lava Rāmāyana of Laos known as Pha Lak Pha Lam

contains a local version of the Rāmāyana and reflects the values, customs and characteristics of the Laotian people. In this epic Rāvaṇa is the central figure and Sītā is his daughter. The whole story is based on the punishment of Rāvana for his weaknesses. In China, the K'ang-Seng-Hui is the earliest version of the Rāmāyana. Its Jātaka form has been rendered into Chinese and dates back to A.D. 251. Another Chinese translation of the Nidana of Dasaratha appeared in A.D. 472 by Kokeya. In the 12th century A.D. Tairanoyasuori described the Rāmāyana in Japan in the famous Hobutshusu. Mongolia had its own version of the Rāmāyana and there were shadow-plays based on it. The dramatic literature of Thailand owes its origin to, and was influenced by the Rama saga of India, although its affiliation is to certain floating legends including the story of the Dasaratha Jātaka.46 Thus we see that the Rāmāyana has been the major vehicle of India's cultural contacts with South-East Asia. Ayudha in Thailand and Jogjakarta in Indonesia have their origin in the Rāmāyaṇa's Ayodhyā. Near Jogjakarta is the river Saraju named after the Saraju river of the Rāmāyana. The theme of the Rāmāyana enthralled, influenced and inspired people of various castes and creeds not only in India but in most of the South-East Asian countries. Thus the Rāmāyana became a common cultural heritage reflecting the local conditions, the joys and sorrows of the people, standards of values and relations between the different sections of society. This great epic became a truly religious scripture and a harbinger of comfort and ecstasy to millions of people, holding up high standards of morality.47

In Orissa Balarāma Dāsa wrote the first Oriya Rāmāyaṇa (c. 1500 A.D.) the most popular among more than a dozen versions of the epic tale of Rāma and Sītā existing in the language. Like Sarala Dasa's Mahābhārata Balarāma Dāsa's Rāmāyaṇa is also tinged with local colour. His Bhavasamudra is a unique literary expression of the sublime devotion, complete surrender and self-forgetting love of an essentially pious soul who sometimes challenges his beloved Lord and takes Him to task in the most daring terms, which of course clearly brings out the real

bhakta in him.

An idea of his apparently challenging but fundamentally prayerful attitude can be had from the following lines taken at random from his work. Referring to the abduction of Sītā, he bursts into open daliance. Sarala Dāsa's Vilanka Rāmāyaṇa has as its theme the killing of the thousand-headed Rāvaṇa by Sītā when Rāma and his brother Lakṣmaṇa as well as Hanumāna failed

in their attempt to encounter him in battle. Pulvar Kulandai's Rāvana-Kaviyam, composed in 1946, is an epic written only to

glorify Ravana of the Ramayana.49

Nāgacandra, who lived towards the close of the 11th and the early part of the 12th century, has two works to his credit, Mallinātha Purāna and Rāmacandra-carita Purāna, the second of which popular known as Pampa Rāmāyana, is the earliest available Rāmāyana in Kannada, following the tradition of the Jaina writer Vimala Suri's Prakrit work Paumacariya. K. V. Puttappa (Ku-Vem-Pu) 's unique gift to Kannada literature is his Śrī Rāmāyana darśanam. This is an epic written in the grand style, in blank verse running to 25,000 lines, on the traditional theme of the Rāmāyana. But his approach is entirely new, spiritual aesthetically and mystically and hence it opens new horizons.

Prakasarama, also known as Divakaraprakasa Bhatta, who was contemporary of Raja Sukhajivana Malla, a Hindu Nazir (governor) of Kashmir under the Afghans around A.D. 1760. Prakasarama wrote the Rāmāyaṇa in Kashmiri known as Rāmāvatāra-carita⁵⁰ with a sequel Lava-Kuśa-carita. It consists of 1,786 stanzas, some in the two-line Persian haza metre and the rest in the native four-line accented metre of Kashmir.

Buddhism was firmly established among the Siberian Buryats by the end of the 17th century. The Kalmyks, however, had embraced Buddhism through the Tibetans earlier. The $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana$ story was known in Siberia and there is no evidence of the epic

having been translated in the Kalmyk⁵¹ language.

The works which bear clear testimony to the direct influence of Tamil belong to the Tamil stream. The most outstanding example is the famous work entitled Rāmacaritam (c. 12th century A.D.). The subject is the Yuddhakānda of the Rāmāyana and is written by one Ciraman⁵² in a language which is an

artificial mixture of Tamil and Malayalam.

Ezhuttacchan (c. 16th century A.D.) was not only a poet but a philosopher and reformer too. His most important works are Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa and Bharatam. Vālmīki's Rāma is only an ideal man, a good king of the people; but for Ezhuttacchan Rāma is God-incarnate, very much like the Rāma of Tulasidasa. The very mention of the name of Rāma was enough to transform the poet into a real devotee and epithets flowed from his pen almost spontaneously as Vālmīki was induced to write about the Man Rāma at the sight of tragic end of one of the birds of the pair. Compared with the Rāmāyaṇa, his Bharatam is more original and profound. In the former, we see the poet's struggle to compromise

between the philosopher and the poet in him, but in the latter, the poet assumes the lead. As regards description the use of figures of speech and characterisation Ezhuttacchan is immensely successful in both the classics. The language is direct and simple, but powerful and pervasive.

Another interesting theme on the Rāma episode was written by Vaisnava Acarya (c. 1268 A.D.) in his Hamsasandeśa. The poet was one of the most eminent stalwarts of the Visistadvaita School. The work provides a contrast and is a simple sensuous poem in the mandākrāntā metre made famous by Kālidāsa in his Meghadūta. The subject-matter of the poem is Rāma's sending a swan (hamsa) as the messenger to reassure Sītā languishing in captivity at Lanka. Though it is also meant as a symbol of God's reassurance to man for the soul's liberation through the guru, Desika or Venkatanatha, the Vaisnava Ācārya has taken care to see that the moving context of Rāma's separation from Sītā is not submerged by philosophy. The first part charts out the swan's route to Lankā (cf. Kālīdāsa's Meghadūta, the choice of the route by the Cloud-messenger from Ramagiri to Alaka), providing a chance to describe the grandeur of India's south dotted by holy temples, perennial rivers, and stately mountains. The second part contains instructions to the swan as to how to approach Sītā and deliver the message. The ten verses, beginning with the seventy-third, bring before our eyes the captive Sītā as imagined by an agonized Rāma.53

As in Tudor England, so in Bengal of the Nadiya period, the growing strength of the vernacular literature showed itself in two ways: the original compositions and its translation of the classics. Of the many Sanskrit works that engaged the attention of the translators were, of course, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata and after them the Bhāgavata. There were so many translations of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata that, even if none of the other Purāṇas had been translated, we should still have been justified in calling this period the period of Puranic renaissance.

Of the twenty or so versions of the Rāmāyana the most outstanding were those of Adbhuta Acarya by Sasthivar Sen and his son Gangadas Sen, and by Kavichandra Chakravarti. The first is of the 17th century, the rest of the 18th century. Adbhut's real name was Nityananda, and his work was so popular, particularly in North Bengal, that parts of it have crept into all editions of Krittivāsa's version. Fakir-rām is specially memorable as the author of the episode 'Angader Raibār' (Angad's embassy)

which he interpolated in his work, and which has since become

quite a common feature of the Bengali Rāmāyana.

Krittivāsa did not set out to make a literal translation of the Sanskrit Rāmāyana, but to retell its main story in his own way. His work was not intended for the learned, who, knowing Sanskrit, would have preferred in any case to read the original. It was intended for the common people, and it has all the engaging qualities of first-rate folk literature. The grand style of Vālmīki's epic is beyond its reach, nor is it faithful to its original in respect of incident and character. Original incidents have been freely omitted and modified, and new incidents, in all probability derived from the Bengali folk-lore, have been freely interpolated. The characters represent the popular, even the rustic, ideals of Krittivasa's Bengal, with little or nothing of their original heroic spirit. Krittivāsa's work is his own. Just as the classical Greek and Latin epics underwent physical and spiritual changes in the vernacular languages of India, there are many instances of the main changes introduced by Krittivasa and other translators of the Rāmāyana.

An important reason for putting Krittivasa in the company of the later translators is that his work has not come down to us in its original purity. Its great popularity made it common property, and in its present form it contains much that is the work of interpolators. The genuine and spurious, the original and the interpolation, have become inseparably fused in the course of five centuries. The language, too, has altered and become almost modern. Most of the episodes Krittivāsa interpolated, e.g. those of Mahīrāvaņa, Bhasmalocana, Angad's worship and Rāma's worship of Durgā were taken from local life; while a small number such as the episode of Sītā's exile were derived from current versions of the epics in languages other than Bengali. This interest is ethical, not literary, and the world they reproduce is not the ancient India of Vālmīki but the Bengal of his own day. The characters retain their original names of Rāma, Sītā, Laksmana and Rāvana, but in reality they are Bengali men and women. They retain their original rôles of kings, queens and warriors, but they represent popular and rustic ideals of the heroic poem. The lofty and austere virtues of courts and camps have been replaced by soft and sentimental domestic virtues. The heroic note has been softened to the point of extinction in the many devotional passages that have been interpolated, particularly in the recensions of the Rāmāyana. The Vaisnavas have been most busy here, claiming Rāma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, and

converting the epic into a hymn of *Bhakti*. Much absurdity has been the result, as when Taranisen and some other Rākṣasa generals kneel before Rāma, and the battlefield becomes a

prayer ground.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt has called Krittivāsa of Phulia the 'Ornament of Bengal' and his utterance is fully justified. The way in which Krittivāsa's Rāmāyaṇa-pāñcālī has influenced the life and literature of the medieval Bengal can be compared with no other work except Kāśīrama's Mahābhārata. Even today Krittivāsa's Rāmāyaṇa holds a position of its own. The ideal and philosophy of Bengal life is influenced at every stage by this great work.

Although the Rāmāyana of Krittivāsa was, and still is, very popular nothing much is known about the poet. In some printed copies of the Rāmāyana can be found a short introduction in verse at the beginning of the poem, known as the atma-parichay (self-acquaintance). In this a detail account of his family is presented. In the old copies, however, very few points are touched on his family and whatever is available does not tally with the verse under 'self-acquaintance'. For this discrepancy critics believe that these verses are mere later interpolations. But, as verified, all references to the 'self-acquaintance' are not fake; on the contrary, in one or two old copies there is verity. Here the poet has narrated, in detail, the history of his own family, his learning, of the Gauda king and his court, but, in none of them we get the exact date of the poet's birth; there is also no reference to the period when he actually lived. From the 'self-acquaintance' we come to know that the poet's ancestor was Narasimha Ojha (Upadhyaya), who was a resident of East Bengal. When discord fell in that part of the State Narasimha shifted to Phulia on the bank of the Ganges of West Bengal and began to reside there. Narasimha's successor was Murari Ojha, whose son was Vanamali and Vanamali's son was Krittivasa. Although they had the surname of Mukhopadhyay yet they were better known by the title of Ojha. Krittivāsa had five brothers and one sister. He was born on the pancami tithi of the last day of the month of Magha which was Sunday (Adityavāra Srī-pañcamī pūrņa Māgha māse). But about the year (Saka era) of birth nothing was said.

When he completed his eleventh year and was twelve years old he went to the north on the Padmā. There he stayed for quite a long time in his preceptor's house and after acquiring learning he presented himself at the court of the Gauda King. The poet has described, in minute detail, the court and the

courtiers but he has not mentioned the name of the King. The King was highly pleased at his learning and expressed his wish to honour him by offering him a lump sum. But the Brāhmaṇa poet, who was free from greed, refused the offer and returned to Phulia only with the honour of a poet as recognised by the King. Then he remembered his preceptor's saying and engaged himself in writing the Rāmāyana-pāñcālī.

Krittivāsa was born before Caityana. Jogeschandra Vidyanidhi, on astronomical calculation, thinks that Krittivāsa was born between 1386 and 1398 A.D. He went to the Gauda court when he was quite young (at the age of 20 years), and thus the year would be approximately 1418 A.D. At that time Ganeśa was the king of Gauda. Some think that he did not go to the court of any Hindu king; he had been to the court of Rukunddin Barbak Shah, the Pāṭhān Sulṭān. But from the account of his 'self-acquaintance' we know that he had never gone to any Muslim court. Let us, therefore, take that he went to the court of Ganeśa and as evidence from the Kulaji Granth, he was born during the later period of the 14th century.

Krittivāsa's popularity can be gleaned from the large number of copies of his book which are available. Of course, because of his wide popularity the language of his poetry has changed much. In the printed copies which are available at present a great change from the original Krittivāsī Rāmāyaṇa can be noticed. Under supervision of Serampore Christian Mission Krittivāsī Rāmāyaṇa was first printed in 1802-03; in the subsequent years all the Rāmāyaṇas which were published are based on the Serampore edition.

Krittivāsa narrated in brief the original story of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa in Bengali payār-tripadī metre. His Rāmāyaṇa is therefore not the literary translation of Vālmīki, it is a translation based on the original ideas as nurtured by the sage-poet Vālmīki. Krittivāsa took matters also from other Rāmāyaṇas and some matters are his own creation. According to some, Krittivāsa did not know Sanskrit; he listened to the reading of the Rāmāyaṇa and composed his own Rāmāyaṇa-pāñcālī. This view can hardly be accepted. In Kulajī he has been described as wise and a man of learning. That he was a Sanskrit scholar is beyond doubt, because the way in which he has followed Vālmīki in his composition clearly shows that he was least ignorant of Sanskrit.

He, however, wrote a pāñcālī while Vālmīki composed an epic. Therefore, it lacks the spirit of Vālmīki. Krittivāsa made it suitable for the Bengali people and presented the original

VĀLMĪKI RĀMĀYAŅA AND OTHER RĀMĀYAŅAS

Rāmāyana in pāñcālī fashion. There is the exuberance of language and the presentations are various, but the characters of Rāma and Laksmana could not gain much artistic maturity. The heroic character of Rāma of Vālmīki was turned into a god of devotees in Krittivasa; Sītā, the wife of a Ksatriya, became a Bengali housewife, as it were; the humorous remarks made by Hanumāna also bear testimony to the Bengali mind and culture. In fine, Krittivāsa had distilled the Vālmīki Rāmāyana so much so as is needed to present a true form of Bengali mind and culture. And this is the reason why he could win the heart of the Bengalee people. Tulasidasa inspired the northern India by the touch of his magic wand in his Rāmacharitamānasa and before him Krttivāsa made the same trail in Bengal. As a matter of fact, Krttivāsa injected the juice of Bhakti in his Rāmāyana, which was the be-all and end-all of the Chaitanya period, only in a new form and with a new meaning. Rāma-Laksmana-Sītā became the sons and daughter of Bengal household, the total life of Bengal merged in Krttivasa. If any poetry is to be called the national poetry, the honour is to go to Krttivasa and Kasidasa, the composers of the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata respectively.54

The Rāma cult, one of the earliest forms of Vaisnavism was at one time the most popular creed not only in Bengal but in the whole of Aryavarta and which had laid the foundations of the great temple of domestic virtues in India. It was Buddhism that had made the earliest protest in the religious history of the world against the divine commandment 'Multiply and be fruitful' by founding monasteries for the monks and nuns. In the Sāmānya Phala Sutta the Buddha is found openly to uphold the superiority of celibate life over that of the householder in a most eloquent speech which made the great king Ajātaśatru a warm convert to Buddhism. It may be urged that the Rsis of old and the Jaina ascetics had sometimes led lives of celibacy. But the Rsis in most cases lived in seclusion with their wives and children surrounded by disciples, the Gārhasthāśrama or home-life being regarded as essential not only for completing their worldly training but spiritual culture as well.

A growing propensity among the young men of the age to respond to this call from monasteries was naturality dreaded by the Hindu community as life in monasteries meant a severance of all connection with family-life. (Cf. Chaitanya's obtaining permission from his sorrowing mother). The first emphatic reply to this much dreaded call from the monasteries came from Vālmīki, the epic poet, who according to the latest accepted views

of scholars, lived in the 4th century B.C., i.e. during the Maurya period. The Rāmāyana emphatically preaches that there can be no sanctuary as sacred as one's own home. The son who keeps the pledged word of his father is deified. The brother who follows his elder's footsteps and the one that lives like a monk sorrowing over his separation from him, are both elevated to the rank of the gods. For a wife there can be no heaven higher than the company of her husband, though she has to leave the palace and, accompanying him, has to lead a miserable life in forests infested with demons and ferocious animals. The servant who obeys the master with implicit trust and devotion finds a seat in the pantheon of our gods. Hanumana, the great Ape of the epic, is today worshipped by millions in India. The virtues of friendship and devotion find exalted illustrations in the lives of Sugriva and Vibhisana. Morality itself is here seen overshadowed by the towering banner of virtues of family-life; Rāma kills Bāli in a manner which can hardly be defended from a moral standpoint, but it is for the sake of his friendship with Sugrīva; and Vibhīsana wins high laurels for a similar reason, even by abandoning the cause of his kith and kin, nay, by helping in their destruction. Rāvaṇa, the archtype of all evil, is not here hated so much as the hunchback, Mantharā who causes a disruption in family-life and Dasaratha is not admired so much for fulfilling his pledge as for dying for the sake of affection for his son, the banished prince.

It should be borne in mind that the home-life was not altogether turned into a 'rosy path of dalliance' in the teachings of the epic poet. All the austerities ever practised by Yogī or Bhikṣu were undergone by the chief characters. These were not undergone for suppressing human desires by an almost superhuman struggle against flesh, neither for embarking on the perilous intellectual paths to solve the riddles of life nor for trying to know the Unknown and the Unknowable but the austerities of the chief characters of the Rāmāyaṇa were all for the sake of domestic ties, for the Epic was an irrefutable answer to those who proclaimed that the sphere of high spiritual bliss is outside the pale of one's own home.

The Rāmāyaṇa is the first great book which inculcated the religion of domestic virtues and by its presentation of a great story in this new light it successfully met the arguments of those who wanted to establish the superiority of monastic life. The slackened ties of home were strengthened by its teachings and the attempts of the Bhikṣu to demolish at the hands of the Master whose brilliant advocacy of domestic affection fell like the heaviest

85

of thunderbolts on the top of the great Buddhist monasteries. The Lalitavistara and Aśvaghosha's Buddha-carita could not make such impression as the Rāmāyaṇa did throughout the length and breadth of the Indian peninsula, from the Himalayan valleys to Cape Comorin. The later Brahmanic school tried, by various interpolations, introduced into the poem, to transform the great Epic inculcating domestic virtues into a propagandist work of the Vaisṇava sect. But the main features of the Epic is ill concealed under the thin veneer of the doctrine of incarnation, diseminated by the Brāhmaṇa zealots.

Nowhere in India has this inspiration of home-life, breathed in the Epic, been so much appreciated as in Bengal. Here the vernacular recensionists made a further advance in investing the incidents of the poem with a living domestic interest. From Krttivāsa to Raghunandan we have a host of Bengali poets, each of whom recast the Rāma-tale in his own way, adding some elements of home-life peculiar to Bengal.

In fact, in Bengal we have made the Rāma cult absolutely ours in every respect putting an emphatic stress on its domestic features, whereas in the work of Tulasīdāsa, these have been made subservient to a whole-hearted devotion for Rāma in a semi-pantheistic spirit. The characters of Rāma and Sītā in the Bengali recension are not at all on the lines of the great Epic. They are Bengali in every respect, and though their figures have undoubtedly been made less towering, they win our affection and sympathy the more, being rendered into exact copies of men and women as we find in Bengali homes.⁵⁵

The domestic ideas set forth in the Rāmāyaṇa still hold up the torch for illuminating the paths of our people from infancy. We need only name Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to denote brotherly devotion. These names, uttered together to a Bengali without requiring further elucidation, carry a suggestiveness of the highest love existing between two brothers. Every girl hears from her infancy that she should be true like Sītā. The blessings of her elders on her have always been, 'May you have a mother-in-law like Kauśalyā, and a brother-in-law like Lakṣmaṇa.' So the gods of the Rāmāyaṇa really represent our own conception of the ideal virtues of domestic life and are not dwellers of any other paradise than the Bengali homes.

A quite different trend can be noticed in the Meghnādvadhkāvya of Madhusudan Dutt of Bengal of the 19th century. Although this work is based on the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, there is deviation in the style of narration, in the theme as also in the traits of the characters. Fundamentally alien though Madhusudan was from his native culture, he nevertheless had two real affinities with it. One was his love for Krttivasa, Kasīrāmadāsa and some other old Bengali poets, and the other was his love of Indian mythology. Once he said, 'Though as a jolly Christian youth I don't care a pin's head for Hinduism, I love the grand mythology of our ancestors. It is full of poetry. A fellow with an inventive head can manufacture the most beautiful things out of it.'56 Tilottamā was derived from Indian mythology, and Meghnādvadh, Madhusudan's masterpiece, was based on an episode of the Rāmāyaṇa. But the latter poem was more Greek than Indian. In another place Madhusudan says, 'It is my ambition to engraft the exquisite graces of the Greek mythology on our own. In the present poem (Meghnādvadh) I mean to give free scope to my inventing powers and to borrow as little as I can from Vālmīki. I shall not borrow Greek stories, but write, rather try to write, as a Greek would have done.'57

Madhusudan however could not actually succeed in writing as a Greek would have written or in doing anything more than borrow some episodes from Homer and imitate his general heroic spirit. Rāma's descent into hell is derived from Homer, as is the machinery of the gods and the goddesses, taking part in the war between Rāma and Rāvana. Madhusudan goes to Tasso, Milton, and some other poets besides Homer and skilfully assembles the materials he collects from many sources into an organic whole. He was perfectly justified in saying that he had constructed Meghnādvadh on the most rigid principles. He safeguarded the heroic character of his poem by keeping it completely clear of religion—a great achievement when we remember that all the vernacular versions of Sanskrit epics and semi-epics before him had been religious in character. The Bhakti element had even crept into the original Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata and betrayed their heroic character. Meghnādvadh had some fine lyric passages like Sītā's description of her life in Pañcavațī and some passages of spirited action (most notably the Seventh Canto). Its heroic character is somewhat softened by the pathetic note with which it begins and ends.

Meghnādvadh's theme is the killing of Meghnād by Lakṣmaṇa in the war between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. Meghnād is the hero, and to elevate him and Rāvaṇa Madhusudana has wantonly degraded Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. He says, 'I despise Rāma and his rabble, but the idea of Rāvaṇa elevates and kindles my imagination.'

Rāma and Laksmana are two of the noblest figures in Indian

mythology, but in Madhusudan's poem they are devoid of valour and honour. It is open to question whether so unorthodox an attitude towards the national tradition is justified in an epic poet; the world's great epic poets have exalted their heroes as national idols. In any case the degradation of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa has not really served Madhusudan's purpose of elevating Rāvaṇa and Meghnāda, that purpose would have been best served if he had matched them against heroes worthy of their steel. In the Rāmāyaṇa Meghnāda is killed in the battlefield and in fair fight, but in Madhusudan's poem he is unarmed and engaged in worship in a temple when Lakṣmaṇa appeared clad in celestial armour and kills him in cold blood. Before his death Meghnāda throws a cup at Lakṣmaṇa who swoons at the blow. With such gesture should we call the poem heroic or should we call it a mere

mock-heroic poem.

The whole poem is written in nine cantos. The whole incident, as narrated by the poet beginning with the news of the death of Virvāhu and ending with the murder of Meghnāda and Pramila's mounting the funeral pyre of her husband, covers three days and two nights. Although the poet has borrowed the material from the main story, as presented by Vālmīki, he, in order to give Rāvaṇa-Meghnāda-Pramīlā new forms, has changed the story and the characters, as needed. The fourth canto in which Sītā has a long conversation with Saramā and the eighth canto which relates to Rāma's visit to Dasaratha in the nether world seem to be irrelevant. But, for the lyrical quality the pleasant characters of Sītā and Saramā and the tactful narration of the whole of the Rāmakathā the fourth canto can hardly be eliminated from the main structure. In the eighth canto Rama brought the elixir of life from Dasaratha residing in the nether world and saved the life of Laksmana who lost his sense being hit by Meghnāda's arrow and this incident, not found in the original Rāmāyaṇa, has been successfully blended in his epic after the model of Vergil's Aenid and Dante's Divina. The 19th century Bengal, when Madhusudan was born and grew up, was passing through a period of renaissance and there was an upsurge for breaking the traditional elements and this rebellious sentiment is permeated through the poem of Madhusudan. Ravana therefore became the idol of the poet because in the former the poet could feel the pang of sufferance and the spirit of rebellion which marred the Bengali race of his time.58 In this context one thing we must not lose sight of. The epic commences with the lamentation of Rāvaṇa for the death of his beloved son Vīrbāhu and it ends with his lamentation for the demise of his mighty son, Indrajit. The poet's intention was to write an epic based on heroic sentiment, but alas his hero Rāvaṇa does not exhibit his heroism. If the hero laments like Rāvaṇa could the epic be called a heroic tale.

The Meghnādvadh is the expression of the poet's classic imagination. On the unlocking of the elements of heart lurks the loftiness of an epic. The sublimity of Meghnādvadh lies in its application of similies, its language and metre, in the delineation of characters and incidents, in the presentation of thoughts, sentiments and feelings. The chief characteristics of this poem of Madhusudan are the creation of thoughtful situation, of eulogised characters, warranting the incidents dramatically, the skill in framing the structure, the depth and pervasiveness of imagination, the restraining of fine excess and the spontaneous outpouring of human interest.

The background of this poem is the golden Lankā. But the age which has been taken into account is not the age of affluence but that of debacle. In describing the fallen days, the poet continuously hints at the past glory and here the poet has exhibited his artistic skill. It is by means of his audacious art that he is able to infuse pathos with grandeur and has presented the sublimity of classic poetry. The Meghnādvadh is the only work in Bengali literature in which the heroic sentiment is blended with the sentiment of compassion, the one has lost its importance in presence of the other. Some critics opine that the Meghnādvadh is bred only with the sentiment of compassion, but in fact in this work the sentiments of both heroism and compassion go hand in hand, one is corollary of the other.

The sentiment of compassion is the creation of one's own mind and according to some, this self-projection of the poet is transformed into the character of Rāvaṇa. In speaking about Rāvaṇa, the poet has spoken about himself in a much similar way as Milton has divulged his own self in the character of Satan in Book I of his magnum opus, the Paradise Lost. Providence-stricken mighty Rāvaṇa is the embodiment of the soul of the poet himself. There is some truth in such statement and this might be the reason why personal appeal is more prominent in the poem. The way in which the poem is opened with the sad fall of the mighty Vīrbāhu sufficiently proves the successful blending of the two sentiments—heroism and compassion—and this is the original style of the poem. Vīrbāhu has fallen in the battle, but the fall was not of any coward, it was the fall of a really brave. The poet

has therefore called out in a high pitch of tone 'sanmukh samare padi Vīrchudāmani Vīrbāhu'.

At the bottom the Meghnād has the mantle of heroic poetry, the sentiment of compassion is the expression of a romantic poet. Rāvaṇa, the hero of the poem, has two forms—one is impersonal and the other personal. On the one hand, Rāvaṇa is the lord of Laṅkā, the resort of the inhabitants of Laṅkā, on him lies the responsibility of protecting the honour and glory of Laṅkā; on the other, Rāvaṇa is the father of Meghnād, father-in-law of Pramīlā and the husband of Mandodarī. He has become impatient at the sight of the sad plight of the people of Laṅkā, in the same way as he is unnerved at the tragic death of Vīrbāhu. As a king his feeling and thought are pervasive, as father, father-in-law and husband his emotion has depth and solidity. In the one flows the heroic sentiment, in the other the sentiment of compassion is primary.

The two queens of the demon-king, who are presented in this poem, are Chitrāngadā and Mandodarī. Chitrāngadā's relation with Rāvaṇa is impersonal, but Rāvaṇa's relation with Mandodarī is fundamentally personal. In Chitrāngadā's remorse at the death of Vīrbāhu there is no narrowness of personal lamentation, no personal feeling has been expressed in her outburst against Rāvaṇa. 59 It will not be out of place to note that both Chitrāngadā and Vīrbāhu are Michael's own creations, not

to be found in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaņa.

In western authentic epics the personal acquaintance of a character is the prime factor, in a literary epic such acquaintance is secondary, and the acquaintance of the country and her people is primary. Homer concentrates on individuals and their destinies. Vergil shows that his special concern is the destiny not of man but of a nation, not of Aeneas but of Rome. In Meghnādvadh there are individuals and their respective destinies but at the same time there is also the destiny of a nation. In the lamentation of Chitrāngadā for the loss of her only son can be heard the pain and remorse of many a mother who has lost her son. 60

There is Rāvaṇa, but there is also the golden Lankā. If a comparison is drawn the golden Lankā will fall very short of Rāvaṇa and Rāvaṇa's representative form will be shadowed by his personality. And from this aspect Meghnādvadh is to be considered as a poem of characters. This original trait of an authentic epic is derived from the Greek influence. Behind this work the maxim of Greek literature 'Man is the measure of all

things' has an indelible stamp.

REFERENCES:

- ¹ Ādikāṇda, 1: Mā niṣāda tvam agamah śvāsvatī samāh/ yat krauñcamithunād ekam avadhi kāmamohitam// No fame be there for endless time/, Because, base outcast, of thy crime/, whose cruel hand was fair to slay/ One of this gentle pair at play//: 1.2.15. N. Griffith.
- ² Jacobi, Rāmāyaṇa, p. 66 note; Ibbetson, D. and Majumdar, A. K. in Ind. Ant., No. 24, 1895, p. 220; No. 31, 1902, p. 351; Sen, D. Ch., Bengali Rāmāyaṇa, p. 125, a similar Mohammedan legend, pp. 127ff. See also Temple, S. R. C., The Legends of the Punjab, I, 1884, pp. 529ff. Balmik, i.e. Vālmīki is worshipped as a kind of saint by the caste of the scavengers in Eastern Punjab.
- ³ Sylvain Levi, Le theatre indien, Paris, 1890, pp. 327ff.; Keith, A. B., The Sanskrit Drama, Oxford, 1924, pp. 28, 47ff.
- The orthodox Hindu adores the hero and the heroine of the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana$ as gods incarnate and deems it nothing short of sacrilege to scan and dissect their life themes 'too sacred for babblement and profane mouthing'. This attitude is discernible in most commentators on the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana$ who try to explain its intricacies mostly in a reverential and non-critical spirit, prepossesses as they are with the notion of the semi-divine character of the origin and content of the epic.
- ⁸ According to Suri's own statement the epic was composed in A.D. 4, according to the concluding verses belonging to the poem itself, it was written in the year 530 after Mahāvīra, i.e. about 62 A.D. E. Lennmann considers this date as unassailable, while H. Jacobi (ERE, VII, p. 467) assumes that it was written in the 3rd century A.D.
- ⁶ In the 68th Parvan of Gunādhya's *Uttarapurāna* and in the 7th Parvan of Hemachandra's Sastisatakapurusacarita the base is the Paumacāriya. The Jain Rāmāyana of Hemachandra influenced the Bengali version of the Rāmāyana, as is shown by D. C. Sen in his Bengali Rāmāyana, pp. 26, 204.
- ⁷ Rāvaṇa's appearance as a sage and father of Sītā in the Buddhist and Jaina versions of the saga of Rāma should not be looked upon as traits pointing to ancient traditions, as is done by D. C. Sen. In the Adbhutottarakāṇḍa, too, Sītā appears as the daughter of Mandodarī, Rāvaṇa's queen. This however is a late appendix to the Rāmāyaṇa, written in praise of Sītā as Sakti, and is popular among the Sāktas in Kashmir. See Grierson, JRAS, 1921, pp. 422ff. Eggeling, Ind. Off. Cat., VI, p. 1183 and Weber, HSS, I, pp. 128ff.
- K. Watanabe, JRAS, 1907, pp. 99ff.
- In this respect Weber's suggestion that Homeric poem should have influenced Vālmīki's poem does not hold good. Critics of this school (Jacobi, ibid., I, pp. 94 ff.) think that there is not even a remote similarity between the stealing of Sītā and the rape of Helen, between the advance of Lańkā and that on Troy, there is only faint similarity between the bending of the bow by Rāma and that by Ulysses. This has been discussed in detail elsewhere in this paper.

¹⁰ Weber, ibid., I, pp. 134 ff.

¹¹ Rāmāyaņa, IV. 57.6.

VĀLMĪKI RĀMĀYAŅA AND OTHER RĀMĀYAŅAS

- 12 Uber das Rāmāyaņa, pp. 8ff.
- 13 Julius & Negelein, WZKM, 16, 1902, pp. 222ff.
- " Jacobi, loc. cit., p. 131.
- sion and exodus: a resumé, Calcutta, 1978. Chatterji believes that the Rāma Epic in its present shape is not monolithic, but was made up of more than one ancient folk-tales dovetailed into a composite form of high artistic excellence—a magnificient creation of human genius as it is. The work of welding of various elements into a composite mass, he opines, proceeded through centuries and it took a long time for the bard's labours to consummate.

Chatterji maintains that the story of Abduction of Sītā and of her subsequent recovery was of foreign origin, inspired by Homer. He is also of opinion that the conception of Rāvaṇa is also not of indigenuous origin. In Vedic Mythology the gods and asuras are all conceived as normal human beings, but the conception of Rāvaṇa as in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa as a ten-headed twenty-armed Rākṣasa is something abnormal. In ancient Greek mythology there is the story, recorded by Hesiod (c. 8th century B.C.) in his Theogonia, of fifty-headed hundred-armed Giant, Briareos and his two brothers, sons of Ouranos and Gaia. Chatterji puts forth the question as to whether the conception of these Greek giants had something to do with the conception of the grotesque form of Rākṣasa Rāvaṇa of the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa.

- Vide 'Ambattha Sutta' in the Dīgha Nikāya in Pāli and the Mahāvastu in Buddhist hybrid Sanskrit.
- The idea may be fantastic, but interesting.

 Chatterji, op. cit., p. xi. He observes: 'Rather than dismiss the Jātaka story as a deliberate distortion by the malicious Buddhists of a sacred Brahmanic tradition, one should take it for a survival of an ancient folk-tale alluding to a primitive custom prevalent in a society among certain tribes of some part of India in distant antiquity; such an interpretation of the Jātaka episode is borne out by researches in sociology and Social Anthropology; and it is from this sociological point of view that one can reasonably explain the otherwise inexplicable mystery of the birth of Sītā of the Vālmīki Rāmāyana, viz. as a myth called forth by the exigencies of social morality of a later age.'
- 18 Rāmāyaṇa, V. 22.9; See also Sen, D. C., loc. cit., pp. 18ff.
- 19 The matter has been dealt with in detail elsewhere in this work.
- Ramaprasad Chandra in his 'The Popular Creeds of Bengal' (Asutosh Mukherji Silver Jubilee Volume, Vol. III, Pt. I, p. 156): 'The Rāmāyaṇa is the first great book which inculcated the religion of domestic virtue and by its presentation of a great story in this new light successfully met the arguments of those who had wanted to establish the superiority of monastic life. The slackened ties of home were strengthened by its teachings and the attempts of the Bhiksu to demolish home-life found a most vigorous and formidable rebuff at the hands of the Master whose brilliant advocacy of domestic affection

fell like the heaviest of thunderbolts on the tops of the great Buddhist monasteries.'

- ^{20a} XIII, 1.5-6; XIII, 4.3-5.
 - 21 X. 85.6.
 - ²² IV. 1. If the Rāmāyaṇa cannot be dated back beyond the 4th century B.C. and it is supposed that the heroes belonged to a period about six hundred years back, the question naturally arises how the accounts of the deeds of the heroes could have been carried on during the intervening period. The problem is how and when the heroic tradition was first treated by poets, as well as in what form it was preserved during the six hundred years.

Heroic elements are present in Iliad and Odyssey, in Beowulf and the Chuchulain Saga, in the ballads of Marko and Ilya of Murom, in the Volsung story and the Mahābhārata and also the Rāmāyana; but their presence cannot be made a ground for denying the ultimate historicity of the stories. Thus Prof. Chambers (Beowulf, p. 11) while denying the historical existence of Beowulf, acknowledges that we cannot disqualify Beowulf forthwith because he slew a dragon. These unhistorical elements may appear in the heroic poems in many forms; one of the commonest being the introduction of gods and goddesses who play an active part in the story. The reasons for such introduction are easily understood. The heroes are taken to be superhuman, superior to the race of average men; and they can quite conceivably be the rivals of divinities. The gods come down to strive with them and the heroes prove their mettle by fighting every inch of ground, ultimately they come off worse than the gods. Such combats alone conclusively prove the superhuman vigour of the heroes. Hence, to the primitive bard, the introduction of divinities seems an essential element of heroic stories.

- While the Brāhmana bard is busy with his hair-splitting discussions, his moral treatises, his ethical discourses, the heroic narrative is left in the background, and what is worse, sometimes mishandled to point a moral or glorify a priest.
- ²⁴ In the majority of Buddhist stories on the Rāmāyaņa the location of Rāma's banishment is the Himalaya, whereas in the Vālmīki Rāmāyaņa and the Rāmāyaņas based on Vālmīki the place of banishment is the South.
- ²⁵ The words 'Alaka' and 'Lanka' belong to the same group and have the same meaning.
- In one Jātaka, only the Chinese translation of which is available, Rāvaṇa was called a Nāga inhabiting the ocean.
- ²⁷ It is interesting to note in this connection that both Rāvaņa and and Hanumāna were great scholars. Rāvaņa was a true Vedic scholar and Hanumāna had deep knowledge of grammar. The term 'vidyādhara' (holders of learning) is therefore justified.
- ²⁸ Vānara senāpati sāgar meñ pheñkā ek gurutar giri, Jo, nartak ke tālabaddha padachāpon sahit, Chaffānoñ par ludakta-pudakta huā, bhrānta, mathit; Aur uchhli sāgar ke buñdoñ kī ek ākāfgāmī phuhār;

Jisse svarga ke nivāsī uchhal pade khušise, Is āśā meñ kī punah sāgar se niklegā amṛt.

(Kamban: Rāmāyaṇa, 6)

The chief of the monkeys threw a huge mountain down the sea; and he, like a dancer, by pressing his feet in rhythm, began to jump and roll himself on the peak of the mountain; at that sight all are dumb-founded and overwhelmed; (as a result) the water of the sea rose high, (it appeared as if) the water like a (upward) stream will reach the sky; (at the sight) the dwellers of heaven lift up with joy in the hope that nectar will be emitted again from the sea.

- ²⁹ Cf. Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Meghnād-vadh*: characters of Vīrvahu and Chitrāṅgadā. For detail discussion see elsewhere.
- 30 A very common mode of modern days.
- ³¹ The matter has been dealt in detail elsewhere in this work.
- 32 The journey to the forest-hermitage of Rāma constitutes the subjectmatter of Act IV of this drama of Bhasa and in Act V is narrated the abduction of Sītā. In Act IV we find both Rāma and Sītā in a grove in which the latter waters one of her favourite plants. Rāma is aggrieved because he has to perform the śrāddha on the day of anniversary of his father's death and is not in a position to offer suitable gifts to the people. Then comes the demon Ravana in the guise of a mendicant, who is respectfully received and honoured as a guest by Rāma and Sītā. Here is deviation from the matter of the original Rāmāyaņa. Rāvaņa says that he has studied the Vedas and the Sastras, particularly the Śrāddhakalpz, the manual of offerings to the manes. Rāma took a note of this and seeks his advice as to how he can pay homage to his deceased forefathers in the best manner. Rāvaņa describes the gifts with which one should try to pay respects to his father and then says that there lives in the Himalaya a type of antelope with which the manes can be got satisfied fully. Whilst they are conversing Rama sees an antelope that is exactly like this and is running in his front. It is an allusion created through witchcraft by Ravana. Rama hastens after it and leaves Sita all alone. Rāvaņa takes advantage of this circumstance and carries away Sītā crying for help.
- The logician Jayedeva (c. 18th century A.D.) treats the Rāma story in his Prasanna Rāghava, in the opening act of which both Rāvaņa and the Asura Bāṇa are described as rivals for the hand of Sītā. The Unmatta Rāghava of Bhāskara Kavi describes that when Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were pursuing the golden deer, Sītā herself by the curse of Durvāsā was changed into a gazelle. Maddened with sorrow Rāma wanders miserably in search of her, and finally finds her with the help of Agastya.
- 34 W. Stutterheim, Rama Legenden und Rama Reliefs in Indonesian.
- 25 Stutterheim, op. cit., st. 21, p. 505.
- 36 G. Maspero, Le Royaume de Campa, p. 63.
- ²⁷ M. Hubert, 'Le Legende du Rāmāyaṇa en Annam': Bulletin de l'Ecole Française, Extreme Orient, Tome V.

- ¹⁸ Tr. in No. 70 of the Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, April, 1917.
- Dournal of the Malay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, II, 1924, p. 35.
- " Ibid., p. 37.
- ⁴ The best known Ms. of this work was written late in the 16th century A.D. It came into the possession of Archbishop Laud and was passed on to the Bodleian (Oxford) Library in 1633 A.D.
- ⁴² Nearest to the Malay version is a folk-tale from Gujrat in which a man's daughter is put in a box and floats down the sea to a fisherman's hut and later on the father comes to win her hand in marriage. *Indian Antiquary*, XXII, p. 315.
- ⁴⁰ This tale has been heard by the writer, B. K. Chatterji, in the hills of the Kangra district. *Indian Antiquary*, XLV, p. 84.
- "Dineschandra Sen's Lectures on the Rāmāyaṇa, p. 197.
- 45 Stuttenheim, ibid., pp. 52-5.
- ^{45a} The learned scholar Purba-charaka (Poerbat-jaraka) refers the Old Javanese Rāmāyaṇa to the 9th century and to Central Java.
 - ⁴⁸ Prince Dhani Nivata, Selected Articles, II, The Siam Society, The Fiftieth Annual Commemoration Volume, Bangkok, pp. 177-78.
 - To quote V. Raghavan 'Rāma stands for truth, for virtue and valour, and none of the innumerable versions denies the essential value of the Rāmāyaṇa. It is true that many such stories and new episodes have been added in the different versions of the Rāmāyaṇa, especially in South East Asia and in some of them some of the major deviations from the Central Rāmāyaṇa plot of Vālmīki occur. But Rāma is always the central figure around whom all the other characters revolve and the message is the triumph of good over evil: the many-splendoured Rāmāyaṇa has acquired the status of a national epic wherever it has travelled adding to it the local variations, typical local colour and richness.' Cf. also Rabindranath Tagore in his Sāhitya-sṛṣṭi.
 - ⁴⁸ See Mayadhar Mansinha, tr. Balarama Dasa's Rāmāyana, pp. 92-3:

That you Jagannātha, let your wife go to Rāvaṇa, Is very like you;
Not able to maintain your own wife;
Why did you blame another for doing it,
And she, tired of suffering so much with you,
Went rightly to a man who would make her comfortable;
And are you indeed worthy of that beauteous daughter

of King of Janaka,
Believe me, my Lord, you look like no more

Believe me, my Lord, you look like no more Than a servant beside her.

The poet even challenges Jagannātha's existence in Orissa. But the sublime prayer, the genuine tone of total surrender, and the self-forgetting love of a highly sensitive devotee bursts forth most poignantly in many places tearing all veils of pique.

Cf. Michael Madhusudan's Ravana in his Meghnad-vadh kavya.

VALMIKI RAMAYANA AND OTHER RAMAYANAS

- ⁵⁰ This work has been edited in Roman transliteration with an English summary by G. A. Grierson, and published in Srinagar in Persian characters in 1910.
- ⁵¹ Lokesh Chandra & others (eds.), India's Contribution to the World Thought and Culture, Madras, 1970, p. 631.
- ⁵² Ciraman is the name of the poet as known from the last stanza, of the work; but nothing more is known about him.
- ⁶³ dūr bātāyan hate jāe tāre dekhā sayyāprānte līntanu kṣhīn sasirekhā, pūrbagaganer mūle jena astaprāy kabi taba mantre āji mukta hae jāe ruddha ai hṛdayer bandhaner vyāthā labhiāce viraher svargalok yethā. chiranisi jāpiteche virahinīpriyā ananta saundarya mājhe ekāki jāgiyā.

(Tagore, Meghadoot)

'Methinks I see my Sitā
With eyes dim and aimless;
She sighs often; but her lotus face is shrunk.
The eyes send forth tears unending;
Her lamentations deal
With her plight, and my might.
Ah, fate has dealt harshly with her
And she sits emaciated,
Frustration filling her heart.'

(tr. by author)

(tr. by author)

In this context Rāma's repentance for Sītā is worth quoting: Vilāp karen Rāma Laksmaner age bhulite na pari Sīta sada mane jage// ki kariba kothā jāba anuj Laksman kothā gele Sītā pāba kara nirupaņ// man bujhibare bujhi amar Janaki lukāiya acchen Laksman dekha dekhi// bujhi kona muniputra sahit kothay gelen Jānakī nā jānāiyā āmāy// Godavari nire acche kamal kanan tathā ki kamalāmukhī karen bhraman// Padmālaya padmamukhī Sītāre laiyā rākhilen bujhi padmavane lukāyia// ciradin pipāsita kariyā prayās chandrakalā bhrame Rāhu karila ki grās// rājyacyuta āmāre dekhiyā chinatānvitā harilen prthvi ki apan duhita// rājyahīn yadāpi hayecchi āmi bațe rājyalaksmī tathāpi chhilen sannikate// āmār se rajlaksmī hārāila vane Kaikeyir monobhista siddha eta dine// (Krttivasa: Rāmāyana, 4)

The same fate is shared by Siva and Pārvatī in the Mangala Kāvyas. See Sivāyana and Chandimangala.

- 66 Letter to Rajnarayan Basu.
- ⁵⁷ Letter to Rajnarayan Basu.
- Est Here Rāvaṇa plays a somewhat similar rôle like that of Satan in Milton's Paradise Lost. Rāvaṇa is suspicious about Rāma's prowess. He believes sincerely that aided by divine power Rāma, a mere man, has become so powerful as to challenge his indomitable strength. Rāvaṇa is absolutely sure that his opponents are no match for the Rākṣasas who are without any divine help.
- ** 'ekţi ratan more diyāchhile vidhi kṛpāmay; dīn āmi thuechhinu tāre rakṣā hetu taba kāchhe, rakṣa-kulamani, tarur koṭare rākhe śāvak jemati phani.'

(M. M. Dutt: Meghnad-vadh Kavya, I)

⁶⁰ Cf. the subject-matter with that of Synges Riders to the Sea, with reference to the eternal pang of a mother's heart caused by separation from the son. See also Bānglā Sāhitye Nava-nārī by Pramatha Nath Bisi.

VI

THE POET

In none of the Rāmakathās, Harivamiša, Viṣnupurāṇa and Bhāgavat-purāṇa the name of Vālmīki has been mentioned. In the Bhāgavat-purāṇa it is said, 'many a philosopher-sage has described the character of Rāma' but it does not refer to any particular poet by the name of Vālmīki. Vālmīki, the author of the Sanskrit Rāmāyaṇa, is to be the son of a Brāhmaṇa named Sumati. He was brought up by the Kirātas and he took up the life of a robber. A sage gave him advice and taught him the Rāma mantra. He performed penance for such a long time that there was ant-hill or valmīka over his body. He received banished Sītā in his hermitage, brought up Kuśa and Lava and taught them Rāmāyaṇa. He is traditionally called the author of the first verse in classical Sanskrit, which he composed when he was overpowered with emotion on seeing a hunter killing one of a pair of birds.

According to another source, Vālmīki was the son of Varuṇa, the regent of waters, one of whose names is Prachetas. The Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa says that the sage, although a Brāhmaṇa by birth, associated with foresters and robbers. Attacking on one occasion the seven Rsis, they expotulated with him successfully and taught him the mantra of Rāma reversed, or Mara, Mara, in the inaudible repetition of which he remained immovable for thousands of years, so that when the sages returned to the same spot, they found him still there converted into a valmīka or anthill, by the nests of the termītes, whence his name Vālmīki.¹

The current popular tradition about Vālmīki is very much the same as above except that it attributes his conversion to the instrumentality of Nārada instead of to that of the seven Rsis. This popular tradition and the Yogavāsiṣṭha Rāmāyaṇa represent-

ing Vālmīki a sage turned from a robber seek only to sing the glory and the chastening influence of the name Rāma. They recognise by his quondam name Ratnākara, i.e. Treasure-mine, that spiritual faculties lie dormant even in the hardened soul of a criminal and highway robber and that the soul can be awakened to conscience by the proper exhortation of a sadguru. They also inculcate that complete transformation of the soul is possible only by redeeming power of faith, that the Alabaster of sin can drop off by the sweet name of the Lord Rāma. The fanciful derivation of the name Vālmīki from valmīka or ant-hill is intended only to emphasize the rigid austerity of the sage.

In the Sanskrit dictionary the meaning of the word 'valmik' is ant-hill, but no authoritative writer has used the term in this sense. Only Kālidāsa has used the term but not with this meaning. In the Vedas we get the term 'varma' or 'varmi' which means ant and from which the term is supposed to have derived. 'Ra' becomes 'la' but there is no reference as to the transformation of 'mar' into 'lam'. From the root 'val' the words like 'vallī', 'vallarī', 'valaya' have been derived and from the root 'valmi' 'valmik' might have occurred. In such cases, the meaning will be 'leaves, shrubs, groves'. In the story of Chyavana this meaning is more applicable. In the Meghadūta this meaning is more applicable.

It might be that the word is derived from the root 'valam' the source of which is the Indo-European root 'vel' (Skt. val) meaning to spread, to stretch, to describe. In the Rgveda the word 'valguyati' is found meaning to worship in detail. From this archaic root the word 'fili' of the ancient Irish language which

means poet or bhāt might have originated.

Vālmīki has sometimes been associated with Chyāvana. The terminological meaning of the word 'chyāvana' is 'charak', i.e. nomadic, he who roams about, and the chāran poet is a qualified pandit or pupil. The root 'chyu' was not in use for 'travel' in Sanskrit, it was used in the like sense in old Persian or Indian language. In our myths Chyāvana belonged to Bhrgu clan. The Bhrgus were perhaps inhabitants first of Greece, then of Albania, who were called Phruks and in Latin-derived English they were known as Phrygians. They were adept in songs and music. In the Rgveda (1.120.5) also they were applaused for their aptitude in music (bhrgvana). Many stories relating to our ancient gods and goddesses are borrowed from the Bhrgu-Phrygians. The poet Mukunda Kavikankana (mid. 16th century) has referred such stories as being derived from the Bhrgu clan.

It might be that in the beginning the myths or stories on which the Rāmakathā was composed, were the monopolised property of the Chyāvans of Bhrgu clan. In this context, it may be mentioned that the story of Homer's epic is based on the tradition of the Phrygians. But there is no doubt in the fact that although the ingredients of the Rāmakathā, even if collected from outside, the structure was built up on the soil of this country. And that structure was not laid by any single poet; it was the outcome of the utterances of many a poet. And that is why the story has so varied forms and varied sentiments.

In the Khotanese and Sanskrit Rāmakathās Rāvaṇa stole away Sītā in the guise of a mendicant. The sage with whom this Rāvaṇa is impersonated is no other person than Vālmīki. Vālmīki is perhaps no name, but an epithet, the meaning of which is an old sage, who was turned ino the ant-hill for long penance.

The incidents of the *Uttarakāṇḍa* had no relation with the original story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The hero of the *Uttarakāṇḍa* is Vālmīki and not Rāma. Vālmīki offered shelter to Sītā and he directed Lakṣmaṇa accordingly. Sītā gave birth to sons in Vālmīki's hermitage and the sons grew up under his care. Vālmīki taught songs of his own *gharāṇā* to the sons and in pursuance of their singing the songs the last act of the Rāmakathā was played.

A question might crop up in this context, as to why Sītā was taken and kept in the hermitage (tapovan) of Vālmīki, a quite unknown sage in so far as the story was concerned, while there were well-known hermits like Vasistha, the royal preceptor and

the famous Viśvāmitra, Bharadvāja and others.

The episode relates to the sudden meeting of Rāma and Paraśurāma, their momentary fights and the ultimate defeat of Paraśurāma. Rāma (and Lakṣmaṇa) were returning to Ayodhyā after marrying Sītā. All on a sudden, Paraśurāma stood in their way and Rāma could proceed only after defeating Paraśurāma; it does not matter what sort of defeat that might be.

Another interesting point regarding the identity of Vālmīki may be considered from the first śloka of the Rāmakathā, which begins with 'Mā niṣāda'; here niṣāda is perhaps not Rāvaṇa but Rāma himself. The union of the birds was that between Vālmīki and Sītā, Rāma by stealing Sītā killed the sage, as it were. And on this foreword the Druid poet (Vālmīki) composed the poem.

Some account of Vālmīki's life can be gleaned from the first and last books of the epic, which are invariably later additions. In the Bāla or Ādikāṇḍa, he is introduced as a gifted saint who

lived with Bharadvaja and other pupils in the solitude of a beautiful hermitage in the sequesterd valley of the Tamasa. He received from Nārada the outline of the Rāma story, representing Rāma as an ideal man (narottama), endowed with all the qualities of head and heart. After his bath in the Tamasa he chanced to see a fond pair of birds at play with each other. Suddenly, the male was shot at by a hunter and the consequent grief of the female made the involuntary burst forth into a poetic utterance, a pronouncement of curse on the wicked murderer. The requisite inspiration came from Brahma, the 'lord of creation', urging him to convey the truth and pointing out the Rāma story as the proper vehicle. Accordingly, he weaved the śloka metre the instructive narrative of the Rāmāyana, which he taught to the twins Kuśa and Lava, a princely pair of graceful voice. These were the first rhapsodists (kuśilavas) to whom he entrusted the task of reciting his heroic song 'in tranquil shades where sages throng, where the good resort, in lowly home and royal court'.3 In the Uttarakānda Vālmīki received with a fatherly affection the forsaken Sītā in his hermitage where she had been helplessly banished. There she gave birth to the princely twins who were to recite the Rāmāyana and when Rāma performed the Horse sacrifice (aśvamedha yajña), Vālmīki accompanied by the twin rhapsodists visited Ayodhyā where the princely singers drew the tears of the court by singing of the strange fate of which their mother the innocent Sītā had been the victim.

Vālmīki was thus a Brāhmaṇa, an ascetic, a saint, a seer and above all a poet. He was a man with all good qualities and limitations. The popular belief that Rāma was an avatāra seems to have been gaining ground in the time of Vālmīki and it was through the agency of rhapsodists that this belief was fast assuming a theocratic character. Inspite of the unavoidable influence of the existing ballads deifying Rāma, Vālmīki was one of the many sages of popular tradition whose standpoint was preeminently human. He was anxious to represent Rāma more as an ideal man than as a god-incarnate; at any rate he emphasized mainly the human side of Rāma's personality.

In fact we meet with a clearer statement from Vālmīki⁴ proving that he considered Rāma to be a man, for in reply to Brahmā, who came to remind him of his divine origin and former position as the Lord of the universe, Rāma is made to say: 'I consider myself to be a man, Rāma the son of Daśaratha. Who really I am, and from whom I have been, O Lord, tell me (only) that.'

Thus the task of Vālmīki seems to have been to bring out what moral perfection man may reach or what ethical and social ideals man may pursue, by purely human strength (parākrama). Himself a man, Vālmīki naturally viewed things as a man, and what is more, as a moral man. According to him, 'one must be a whole man, who should be judged in his relations with his own past tradition, present education, family connection, social environment and public duties and religion. In the characters of Rāma and Sītā Vālmīki has placed side by side two aspects of life contrasted as stern and simple, the one full of heavy responsibilities of public duty, the other sweet with tender cares of a wife which has a chastening influence on the husband and on which depends the domestic happiness of man. And so in his own life we see the rigid austerity of a hermit contrasted and harmonized with the simplicity of nature, as is evident from his vivid description of the hermit life in the Aranyakanda.

The Rāmāyaṇa does not contain much information regarding the early years of Vālmīki, but it may be surmised from his patriotic and minute account of Kośala, her capital Ayodhyā, her benevolent ruler, her wise ministers, her happy people and abundant riches, that he was an inhabitant of that country. At least Kośala seems to have been the country where he had spent the greater portion of his life. He certainly knew of a few other countries, e.g. Aṅga, Magadha and Kāśī in the east, Sindhu, Sauvira and Saurāṣṭra in the west and the distant kingdom of Aśvapati Kekaya in the north-west, and such other countries which were linked with Kośala by matrimonial alliances and bonds of friendship.

Vālmīki was probably educated at Taxila (Taksaśila), the ancient seat of Brahmanical learning, where he had the good fortune of mastering the Vedas together with all the auxiliary sciences and arts. He appears to have been familiar with the two routes whereby a person could travel from Ayodhyā to Rajagrha, the capital of Girivraja, perhaps the older name of Taksaśila. He was perhaps engaged for a number of years as a councillor in the court of Ayodhyā, faithfully discharging the important function of a judge and jurist. At all events there is no other inference to be drawn from the intimate knowledge which, as the Rāmāyaṇa shows, he possessed of the onerous duties of ministers and other functionaries of the state. A further proof to be advanced in support of this surmise is that he represented among the ministers of King Daśaratha those sages and saints like Vaśiṣtha, Vāmadeva, Jayanta, Vijaya Dhṛṣti,

Siddhārtha, Arthasādhaka, Dharmapāla, Asoka, Jabala and Sumantra whose views should be authoritative in the Indian treatises on morality, law and polity.

Even if it be not allowed that Vālmīki held the post of a minister or a judge, it cannot be denied that at least he was a citizen conversant with the art of government and juristic thought. This is corroborated by the central idea running through, the Rāmāyana, which is nothing but a juristic conception of right, widened in scope and utilised for a spiritual purpose. The śloka 'mā nisāda etc.' which was the starting point the Epic teaches that we have no business to encroach on the right of others, even of the meanest things to enjoy themselves happiness in their own share and in their legitimate ways, and that anyone who violates this rule, is to be looked down upon as a base outcaste and punishable by law. King Dasaratha shot an arrow at Andhamuni's son who came to draw water for quenching the thirst of his blind parents, mistaking the sound of the pitcher for the trumpet of a thirsty elephant. Although it was not a conscious crime of the king, he was cursed by the sorrowing parents that he must share the same fate. The underlying argument with which Valmiki justifies the fateful curse is that Dasaratha interfered with the right of the blind family to live happily and suffered in consequence. Likewise was Sürpanakhā punished as she endeavoured to encroach on the conjugal right of Sītā in tempting Rāma to marry her. In the same way Ravana with his family and people went to destruction, because he had madly violated the divine right by which the princely pair in exile had sought to live in the Dandaka forest.

That Vālmīki's standpoint is Brahmanical and juristic is borne out by the fact that he, inspite of his teaching the daśa-kuśalakarma, ahimsā and the rest, justified slaughter under unavoidable circumstances e.g. in the case of Agastya,⁵ who devoured the demon Vatapi, and killed his brother, although it was quite inconsistent with the hermit life that viewed every creature with sympathy. Herein Vālmīki differed from the Jainas and Buddhists, who under no pretext gave sanction to an act of slaughter. Thus Vālmīki explained himsā as wrath without provocation.⁶

Another distinctive feature, which marks Vālmīki out as a Brāhmaṇa jurist liberal in principle, is that he places everywhere the society above the individual.

When Vālmīki turned an ascetic, and under what circumstances, it is difficult to say. It was probably following the usage

of the time that he withdrew from the world at the third period to spend his closing years in the practice of penance and meditation. There is reason to believe that he built his hermitage in the vicinity of Kośala, where not far from the confluence of the Yamunā and the Gangā, he conceived, developed and finished his epoch-making Rāmāyana. He lived in a time when the different Brahmanical sentiments had been scattered over the country between the Ganges and the Godavari, and one need not be surprised that he had left the memoirs of his personal experiences in the vivid account of the wanderings of Rama from the hill of Citrakūța in the north of Janasthāna (mod. Nasik) to the south, about 75 miles to the north-west of Bombay. He was perhaps not acquainted with that great trade route extending from Kośala to Patitthana (mod. Paithan) near the Godavari, nor with the Daksināpatha, of which an interesting account, with its main stopping places, is to be found in the prologue to a Buddhist canonical book of poems, the Parayanavagga. He had no first-hand knowledge of the countries that lay to the south of the Godavari. He has broadly distinguished them as Kiskindhyā and Lankā inhabited by two different races, the monkeys and the demons, differing in culture, character and religion. As parallel instance of the Buddhist Valahassa-jātaka, the women of Lankā denounced in the Rāmāyana as wanting in morality and female modesty. But as regards Kiskindhyā, Vālmīki recognises that her apish inhabitants had a strong political organisation, social order and Aryan faith.

On the whole his description of Kiskindhyā and Lankā is to be regarded in the following remarks of Griffith: 'The people against whom Rāma waged war are, as the poem indicates in many places, different in origin, in civilization, in worship, from the Sanskrit Indians; but the poet of the Rāmāyaṇa, in this respect like Homer, who assigns to Troy customs, creeds and worship, similar to those of Greece, in Ceylon names of places, the habits of the people and their mode of worship are similar to

those of Sanskrit India.'

Thus the Rāmāyana has sufficient indication that Vālmīki was a Brāhmaṇa jurist and ascetic, whose life was spent within the city walls and the far-off hermitage, the two foci of the elipse in which his whole life moved. His poem, though wanting in details of the daily life of the Indian people at large, preserves a true picture of Indian life at its best. How long he lived none can tell, but he did not live in vain, and surely lived long enough to enjoy that rightly won fame predicted by Brahmā.7

REFERENCES:

- 'For reference see Prof. Wilsons' Specimens of the Hindu Theatre, I, p. 313.
- ² By accepting the 'mā niṣāda' śloka to be the prime verse there is confusion as to whether the Rāmāyaṇa can be taken as the prime poem. It might be that those who made the śloka-story current were aware that the composition of the Rāmakathā could not be attributed to any particular poet and the śloka and the underlying story were older than the prevalent Rāmakathā. Judging from the metric aspect the śloka cannot be the first poetry, because such-like ślokas are commonly traceable in Vedic literature. In respect of grammar also, the śloka is defective. According to Pāṇini the expression cannot be 'mā agamah', it should be 'mā gamah'. However, to the people of the time this śloka was taken to be a very good example. The śloka:

'mā niṣāda pratiṣṭhām tvam agamaḥ śāsvati samāḥ/ yat krauñcamithunād ekam avadhiḥ kāmamohitam//

'Oh hunter, you would never be able to settle yourself. Because you have killed one of the two birds, who united themselves in love'.

- ⁸ Rāmāyaņa, 1.4.13.
- 'Ibid., (Bombay ed.), 6.117.
- 5 Ibid., 3.8.
- 6 Ibid., 3.9.4.
- ' Ibid., 1.2.36.40:

"As long as in this firm set land
The stream shall flow, the mountains stand,
So long throughout the world, be sure,
The great Rāmāyaṇa shall endure.
While the Rāmāyaṇa's ancient strain
Shall glorious in the earth remain,
To higher spheres shalt thou arise,
And dwell with me above the skies."

(Tr. Griffiths, R.T.H.)

VII

CONCLUSION

The episode of Rāma is based on a theme which germinates a permanent appeal to both head and heart. It is theanthropic in approach although its prime composer Vālmiki was keen to tell the story of a man who seems to be the best of all (narottama). The men and women as depicted by him were imbued with such qualities which an ordinary mortal needs possess in order to make his or her life sublime. These qualities are necessary components on which a compact life can be built up on the mundane plane. Living in meshes of reality it is somewhat hard to follow Rāma and his retinue, yet the ideal remains and the idea clusters round the ideal, as it were. We like to feel, to imagine, to meditate on such Ramayanic characters and we aspire to cross over the oasis of life in order to usher in an age of nobility in ignominy, of virtue in vice and of glory in depression. Rāma alongwith his protege began to be veneered with idealism in different ages. Besides the characters, the incidents themselves could influence the mind of people belonging to different times and climes. The characters and incidents are the resultants of emotions recollected in tranquility and as such distance always lends enchantment and the moments are made eternity. Doubts weave around the historicity of the long tale presented by Vālmīki. But there is veracity in respect of the incident of a royal prince being banished on account of a court-intrigue. Neither the characters nor the incidents are local or individual but general and operative and verily the personal is transformed into impersonal. And Rāma, Laksmana, Sītā, Hanumān, Rāvana, Vibhīsana are, therefore, no individuals but types of all ages.

This spirit of universality is the essence of the epic, the sense of beauty and wonder and the Rāmakathā or the tale of Rāma

has therefore been written and re-written, told and re-told many a time in many a way. Quite naturally, the culture and tradition of the area in which the different Rāmāyaṇas were composed have left particular and peculiar impressions of their own. Sometimes the incidents of the story were concentrated only with the area of composition of this wonderful tale, sometimes the areas claim originality and refer to indigenous origin, yet the theme of Vālmīki could not be set aside and the reader of the Rāmakathā has had to trek the influence of the great epic, as narrated by Vālmīki, in all the Rāmāyaṇas. This is because of the fact that the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa is not the story of any particular man or nation, it is the story of the nation of man.

Vālmīki is an epic panegyrist. His is an imagination which is essentially mythopoetic. His Rāma is not only a semi-divine personage but a whit superior to all the characters in the epics and the Purāṇas. Rāma represents, as it were, the combined greatness of the ancient gods and ancient kings in one. This cult of worship of the king was a part of the repertoire of court bards, an institution as old as the epics themselves. The usual practice in Indian monarchy was the elders' accession to the throne following the law of primogeniture.1 But then, Rāma's claim was belied by a court-intrigue. Even then he knew his father's wish and the selfless character of Rāma is portrayed. The same character was portrayed also of Bharata, the claimant and of Laksmana who dedicates his self for the good and well-being of his elder brother. Rāma is a Bodhisattva incarnate as it were. He resolved once and for all to abdicate and seeks the solace of the forest. Here the Indian ideal of efficacy of life in recluse is preached. Rāma and Bharata expostulate with each other for long, not for grabbing, but for forsaking kingship. The finality of Indian life lies in renunciation.

All the Rāmakathās are bred up in the world of romance and the world of romance is the world of a fairy land. The reader deliberately seeks it when he wants to forget the humdrum reality which bores him. Sometimes the tale seems to be improbable and untrue but it soothes the reader's imagination and perhaps appeals to deeper layers in his personality.² The general attribute of projected romance is the fact of the kind of experience with which it deals. It excludes some common reaches of experience in order to concentrate intently upon certain deep layers of experience and exaggerates them and recreates human figures bathed in this new glow. The normal distinction of the possible and the impossible undergo a sea-change of transforma-

tion. The Rāmakathās require of the reader a sense of involvement and participation in the dream-reality. Life here takes on a new dimension as it were, and the experience on which these 'magic casements open out is a multiple one of endlessly interpenetrating stories, very unlike the humdrum procession of banal happenings in a daily routine.' This interlacing of story with story contributes to what may be called a polyphonic and symphonic effect. And the desire of first-hand narration contributes in some small measure to our sense of personal participation in the wonder world of romance.

The Rāmakathā makes new worlds of its own, shows us persons who are not to be found in being, and represents even the faculties of the soul, with several virtues and vices in a sensible shape and character. In the Rāmakathā we can glimpse even today an integrated vision, which can render a tale into a classical perfection, a vision in which man's deepest emotions and aspirations are not polarised by worldly pursuits. We feel as though the poet's mind, heart and spirit, all work together until the ideal becomes fused with the real to form an everlasting design. We get an insight into Man not alienated from tradition or Nature. If the modern age wishes to recapture this integral insight into the Universal Man, without any split or dichotomy between psyche and techne, science and art, myth and history, it can certainly turn to the work of Vālmīki the subsequent tales on Rāma.

REFERENCES:

¹ Cf. Rajyavardhana's abdication in favour of Harshavardhana. Rajyavardhana is the Rāma of Bana's Harshacharita and Harsha the Bharata.

² Welck, Rene & Warren, Austin, The Theory of Literature, London 1949, p. 223.

Appendix I

RAVANA AS THE TRAGIC HERO

Rāvaņa is portrayed in the Vālmīki Rāmāyana as cruel and lecherous. He is strong and learned, but a stark hedonist. He is passion-intoxicated, extremely crude, cruel and selfish. He rejects Dharma and impulsively driven by Fate he is prone to execute a series of misdeeds. Whatever Rāma's real motive might be for the invasion of the Deccan, the Rāmāyana makes no attempt to justify it. It might be that the poet's ulterior motive is to narrate how the Aryans spread their culture in the South where similar developed cultures of the pre-Aryan settlers already existed. And he had to villify, as it were, the character of Ravana because the latter was made to encounter with his Aryan hero. It is, however, not plausible to regard the war between the two any historical event or to deduce from its description a valid portrait of Ravana, largely owing to its mythical-character. Furthermore, the purpose of the supplements, that is, Books I and VII, and the interpolations which enhance the romantic story of Sītā and her abduction by Rāvaņa, serve also to blacken his character. At this stage when the supplements were composed the interesting point to note is that the man-Rāma, as presented by Vālmīki, has been deified. In the original Rāmāyana after Sītā's rescue Rāvaņa is slain by Rāma, but in the seventh book he reappears in numerous supplementary legends, all of a derogatory nature, specially one recounting the rape of his niece Rambhā.1

The popular conception of Rāvaṇa as a monster with ten heads (daśānana) and twenty arms (vimśatibhuja) is difficult to comprehend. This notion has taken such deep root that it has found its way in popular parlance as well as in art. Specimens of ancient sculpture depict Rāvaṇa with myriad heads and arms. Any picture of a human being with ten faces is taken to

represent the figure of Rāvaṇa. This conception though supported by a few passages in the Vālmīki Rāmāyana (leaving out the Uttarakānda), is contradicted by a number of descriptive sketches in which he appears as a normal being. When Hanumana saw Rāvaņa for the first time in sleep in his inner appratment, he found his two arms, bearing gold bracelets, spread out like the flag-staff of Indra. Hanumana also speaks of his one big mouth and only one face (V. 10.15, 24-5). The commentator observes on this passage: 'As the poet speaks here of the two arms of Rāvana, it is to be understood that he assumed ten heads and twenty arms at the time of fighting'.2 This observation is however neither borne out by the Yuddhakanda nor is there any indication of it in the highly rhetorical description of him when he set out to meet the beseiging host. At the very first sight of Rāvana, Sugrīva rushed upon him and in the wrestling bout that followed between the two, Ravana caught hold of him by his two arms and dashed him to the ground; whereupon Sugriva, springing forthwith like a ball, caught hold of Ravana by his two arms and knocked him to the ground (VI. 40.13). In the first encounter with Laksmana, the latter was felled to the ground and rendered unconscious by the spear hurled at him. Ravana tried to lift him with his two arms but failed (VI. 59.109).

The term 'Rāvaṇa' is rather intriguing. According to the Purāṇas 'Rāvaṇa' means one who makes people cry.³ Although the Indian poets take it to be the name of a single individual, yet it is difficult to believe how the Rāvaṇa who had killed Anaraṇya, a remote ancestor of Rāma, could be the same Rāvaṇa whom Rāma himself, coming several generations after him, killed. It seems that like Caesar for the emperors of Rome, like Kaiser for the emperors of Germany, like Tzar for the emperors of Russia and like Mikado for the emperors of Japan, the word Rāvaṇa was a title of distinction for the mighty rulers of Lankā after the pre-Aryans had recovered from their debacle at Tripuri and established a firm footing in the island. This view gains support from the way Pāṇini derives the patronymic 'Rāvaṇa' from the word 'Viśravas'.⁴

The term 'Rāvaṇa' has also two-fold interpretation. It indicates the good rain for agriculture: 'Rāvaṇa' meaning 'Śrāvaṇa' i.e. flood (vanyā). The root 'Ravṇ' of Rāvaṇa can be found in the Avesta, and not in Sanskrit, the meaning of which is river or the stream of river (cf. Ravi the river). In this respect, it can be explained that the flood in the form of 'Rāvaṇa' swept away agriculture in the form of 'Sītā'. (cf. Tibetan Rāmakathā).

Another meaning of the term 'Rāvaṇa' is serpent (nāga), the player and protector of water Yakṣa (or Rakṣa) and according to the Vedic myth the obstructor of water also. Rāvaṇa imprisoned Sītā in the island of the sea (cf. Kālidāsa in Raghuvamśa, 10.48).⁵

According to some the word 'Rāvaṇa' has originated in the non-Aryan language. They are of the opinion that in the language of the Oraons there is a word 'Raon' meaning vulture ($\hat{s}akuni$). But this can hardly be accepted because although Rāvaṇa carries Sītā away, yet a vulture eats the flesh of a dead and does not carry away any living being. If the word means a hawk ($b\bar{a}ja$), the action of Rāvaṇa can somewhat find a comparison, but in that case the derivation is from the Aryan language. In Indo-European language the root 'ren' means to snatch away and in this sense the term 'Rāvaṇa' can be applied. The behaviour of Rāvaṇa is something like that of the flying bird 'hawk' and in this respect the $R\bar{a}makath\bar{a}$ can in no way be taken to be derived from any non-Aryan myth. If this was current in any non-Aryan language in the past it was later adopted in the Aryan language.

As it was discussed earlier the appearance of Rāvaṇa was that of a normal human being. After the death of Indrajit, when Rāvaṇa marched out to give a last-ditch fight to Rāma, his left eye quivered and his left arm trembled ominously (VI. 95.45). In the duel that followed, Rāma cut off the head of Rāvaṇa shining with a flashing crown. Another grew in its place, this too was cut off, and so on until a hundred heads were cut off in succession; in such case the singular number is used (VI. 107.54-7). This might be an exaggeration of the fight or this might be a camouflage by the fighter wearing a mask-like on head in order to put the enemy in a fix. We have already seen that Rāvaṇa is described as having only one head.

When Rāvaṇa made advances to Sītā, she indignantly repulsed him and in course of upbraiding him in scathing terms said: 'O thou vile one, as thou cast thy grim, ferocious coppercoloured eyes upon me, why did they not start out of their sockets and fall down on earth' (V. 22.18). Here also the dual number is used and this is repeated in the couplets that follow. Thereupon Rāvaṇa, rolling his grim eyes, looked at Sītā and stood before her in all his glory with his fully-formed arms 'like unto Mount Mandara with its two peaks' (V. 22.27). Again, when the Rākṣasas reported the doings of Hanumāna to Rāvaṇa, he blazed with anger like the fire of a funeral pyre, and drops of tears fell

from two eyes of that angry one like drops of oil from two burning lamps (V. 42.23).10

There is one celebrated passage in which Rāvaṇa is described as having ten heads and twenty arms. In the vivid description that follows Hanumāna being brought tied into the presence of Rāvaṇa, after he had ravaged the Aśoka grove he beholds Rāvaṇa conspicuous with ten heads and twenty arms, with bracelets and excellent sandal paste. The commentator's note on this text again is 'It is to be understood that when Hanumāna saw Rāvaṇa, the latter assumed a terrible form as he did in war.' (V. 49.6).¹¹

The word 'daśagrīva' meaning one with ten necks is constantly used for Ravana as a sort of permanent epithet. It occurs in Sītā's reproaches to Rāvana immediately after she has spoken of his two eyes (V. 22.18). The legend that Ravana had ten heads, twenty eyes and twenty arms, grew undoubtedly out of this epithet and was intended to convey the idea that he was a warrior of unsurpassed prowess, or that he possessed various siddhic powers. Such epithets have been used in the epic in a metaphorical sense and are 'a good illustration of those curious transformations in which what was once rhetorical becomes by slow degrees real in popular belief'. Rāvana probably had a big head and a big neck as many powerful men have, and perhaps on account of this he was called 'dasagrīva', a man having a neck as large as ten necks put together. Similarly, 'daśānana' or 'daśaśirṣa' simply signified that he had access to the ten quarters of the globe, or that he wore ten crowns or ten-headed crowns (head-gems) in token of his vaunted conquests in the ten quarters of the globe and his paramountcy.12 The word 'daśa' (ten) is often used in this sense and there is another example of it in the name of Dasaratha. Perhaps it conveys that Rama's father had only ten chariots or that he rode in ten chariots simultaneously. Perhaps it conveys that he had a chariot which was as big as ten ordinary chariots, or more probably he was a carwarrior equal to ten such, or his chariot had access to the ten quarters of the globe. It was thus a name involving a comparison, a simile. In the same way, 'daśagrīva' or 'daśānana' was name based on simile. As ages rolled by, the simile was forgotten and it came to be believed that Ravana had actually ten necks and ten heads.13

Sometimes Rāvaṇa is presented with handsome appearance despite the snakes in his hair (cf. the image of Siva) and his hanging tusks (cf. the image of Gaṇeśa), preserved as the inherited

signs of his race. Hanumāna on seeing him exclaims in such a way which readily makes us think that Rāvaṇa was no less manly and handsome than Rāma.¹⁴

The Rākṣasas performed sacrifices. They practised chiefly atharvan rites, abounding in magic and witchcraft, through which they sought and did derive occult powers to make themselves invincible against their foes. Rāvaṇa is called a great performer of sacrifices (VI. 109.23). Being himself an agnihotrin (fireworshipper), fire from his agnihotra was employed in igniting his funeral pyre (VI. 111.104). During the thick of the battle of Lankā, Indrajit resorted to a mysterious rite to gain accession of occult strength. From its description, as given by Vālmiki (VI. 80.5-16), it is clear that Indrajit's sacrifice was what the

Bhagavadgītā terms a tamasa yajña, a base sacrifice.

The belief that Rāvaṇa was a great Vedic scholar is supported by both the earlier and later portions of the epic. The Uttarakāṇḍa describes him as invoking the god Śaṅkara (V. 163.30), i.e. adhering to the Vedic or Brahmanical cult of fire-worship, engaged in high studies and penances, and gone to the farthest end of Vedic studies. When, as his sons and kinsmen were perishing at the city walls before the onslaught of the beseiging Vānara hosts, he resolved to make short work of Sītā, an intelligent courtier Supārśva thus exhorted him: 'How is that thou, being a veda-vidyā-vratasnātah, has entertained the foul thought of killing a woman'. (VI. 92.60). This means that Rāvaṇa had undergone a course of Vedic studies in some hermitage and having completed it, had returned to family-life after the ceremonial bath in the usual Vedic manner. 15

That Rāvaṇa and ather Rākṣasa chiefs spoke Sanskrit is indicated by Hanumāna's fears that if he spoke to Sītā in Sanskrit, she might take him to be Rāvaṇa in disguise (V. 30.18). Does this indicate the ignorance of Vālmīki of the language of the Rākṣasas or the composition was to be done in Sanskrit?

Rāvaṇa was a valliant warrior. He conquered the gods, overran Bhogavati, forced Madhu the Dānava to marry his sister and Maya to give him his daughter as wife, stole Soma and conquered Jaṭāyu. Among his other exploits he carried off Sītā and gods perform some menial office in his household, thus Agni was his cook, Varuṇa supplied water, Kuvera furnished money, Vāyu swept the house etc. i.e. the gods performed duties to which they are usually associated in the Brahmanic pantheon. Again Rāvaṇa invades Rasātala (VII. 23) guarded by Varuṇa below earth, and full of serpents and daityas. After overcoming

Vāsuki's Nāga city of Bhogavatī, he conquers two demon cities, Jewel town and Rock town, and then reaches Varuna's lofty city, 'like Kailāsa white with clouds.' Rāvana also conquered the Gandharvas and Kinnaras and Vidyādharas and carried off their women.16 At most time the car which Ravana drives is drawn by asses (also horses). At war time his chariot is drawn by eight horses.

As regards Rāvana's birth there are two episodes. According to the Mahābhārata (Vanaparva, vv. 15881-15928) Brahmā had menial son Pulastya, who again had a son Goviputra Vaisravana. The latter deserted his father and went to Brahma who as a reward made him immortal and appointed him to be the god of riches, with Lanka for his capital and the car Puspaka for his vehicle. His father Pulastya however being incensed at this desertion of himself reproduced the half of himself in the form of Vaiśravas (vv:15884-5).17 This Viśravas looked upon Vaiśravana with indignation. The latter strove to pacify his father and with this view he gave three elegant Raksasis to attend him; Puspotkațā, who had two sons, Rāvaņa and Kumbhakarna, Mālinī, who bore Vibhīsana, and Rākā, who bore Khara and Surpanakhā. These sons were valiant, skilled in the Veda, and observers of religious rites.

In section 9 of the Uttarakānda of the Rāmāyana, it is related that Sumāli once happened to visit the earth; when he observed Kuvera going in his chariot to see his father Viśravas. This leads him to consider how he might restore his own fortunes. He consequently desires his daughter Kaikāsī to go and woo Viśravas who receives her graciously. She became the mother of the dreadful Rāvana, whose birth was succeeded by portents, of the huge Kumbhakarna, or Surpanakhā, of the righteous Vibhisana who was the last son. Both the episodes refer to Ravana's lineage

from the Aryan fold.

As can be gleaned from the traits of Ravana, the Raksasas were Vrātyas i.e. they were in the Aryan fold but owing to their behaviours and performances they were later turned out of the fold and became Rākṣasas. Some scholars opine that the Rākṣasas were vrātyas (fallen Brāhmanas).18 It is said that the slaying of Rāvaņa, who was a Brāhmaṇa, has laid to the guilt of the murder of a Brāhmana on Rāma. And by way of expiation Rāma has to arrange a horse-sacrifice (asvamedha).19 That Ravana was well adept in Sāstras (veritably a right of the Brāhmaņas) can be known from the remark made by Hanumana when he was captured by Indrajit, Hanumana addressed the following to the

monarch of Lankā: 'A man like you, who are wise and versed in the śāstras and have derived your prosperity from your religious austerities, should not keep another's wife in your custody. Intelligent men like you never commit acts which are sinful and likely to lead to wholesale destruction. It is not proper for you to nullify by such wickedness the merit you have gained from your religious austerities.'20 Hanumāna's (who is himself a scholar of Vedic śāstras) remark is interesting in so far as it is a remark made by one cultured non-Aryan (Vānara) to another cultured non-Aryan (Rākṣasa).²¹

From a number of instances it appears that Rāvaṇa is passion-intoxicated and whenever he sees any beautiful woman he tries to ravish her to his will as in cases of Rambhā, Puñjikasthalā and Vedavatī and in his harem were kept many a damsel from different parts. But in case of Sītā Vālmīki makes Rāvaṇa exhibit his self-control. He became impatient to possess Sītā on hearing about her from his sister, Surpaṇakhā, and in the guise of a beggar when he stole her away he could do with Sītā whatever he liked. But he did not. Of course he made advances and went on inducing her to surrender herself by putting in a series of arguments.²² In course of entreating Sītā Rāvaṇa sometimes expressed the philosophic bent of his mind. But at the same time Rāvaṇa is found to be pride-elated and this is the fatal flaw of his character which ushers in his fall. To the captive Sītā therefore he is prone to exhibit his arrogance.²³

Another important trait of his character is his prudence and intelligence for dealing with his ministers. In crucial moments Rāvaṇa would consult his ministers and when he hears the news of Rāma's invading Lankā he calls his ministers and says wittily that according to the wise victory lies with the king whom the ministers advise prudently. He has therefore decided to seek the good advice of his ministers in the wake of Rāma's advance.²⁴ In this context, he says that there are three categories of ministers and three kinds of advice as there are three categories of ministers. They are, uttama, madhyama and adhama. That advice is the best (uttama) which can be arrived at by concurrence of all ministers; the advice which is open to debate at the outset, but agreed to in the end is the better (madhyama) and the advice which has a tinge of selfishness and does not aim at doing any good is the worst (adhama).

At this stage the ministers inspired Rāvaņa recollecting his feats of the past against Kuvera, Maya, Vāsukī, Takṣaka, Sankha and Jati and the brave sons of Varuṇa. His generals came

forward and assured Rāvaṇa to defeat the two brothers. They even advised him to peacefully rejoice at Laṅkā. Only his brother Vibhīṣaṇa, a well-wisher of the Rākṣasas, dissuaded Rāvaṇa and entreated him to give Sītā back. To this considered advice of Vibhīṣaṇa the proud Rāvaṇa would not pay any heed. He then justifies his heinuous action of stealing Sītā before the members of his council. He refers to his irresistible passion for Sītā, who is the most beautiful woman he has ever seen. Her physical charm has made him mad and he cannot resist his passion. For convincing the members Rāvaṇa lied by saying that Sītā had asked him to wait for one year during which period if Rāma did not come back to her she would surrender herself to him.²⁵

Viewed as a whole, it is seen that Rāvaṇa's sabhā has little influence to exert. Rāvaṇa meets it before the battle, but it is more a formal procedure than anything else; he does not attend to its deliberations. Furthermore, the sabhā is no representative body of the people that the poet has in view, it is only the princes, nobles and generals who might be expected to influence the king most, but even they can achieve very little indeed. Rāvaṇa is, so to say, an autocratic ruler of Lankā.

A somewhat different Rāvana we behold in the Meghanādvadh of Michael Madhusudan Dutt of Bengal. There at the sight of the devastating condition of Lanka after Rama's rampaging the city he is very sad. And here lies a deviation from the Vālmīki Rāmāyana. The Vālmīki Rāvana is not sad, but fully conscious of his own power; he is prone to fight with his rival to the last. In the Meghanad-vadh he makes himself responsible for the ignominy that befell Lanka. The poet of Meghanad has tried to elevate the character of Rāvana, his favourite so much despised by Vālmīki. The poet of Meghanād hates Rāma and his rabbles and therefore his Ravana becomes fully conscious of his deeds, rather misdeeds, erroneously done by him and puts the whole blame on his own self.26 In the Vālmīki Rāmāyana Rāvana is confident of the superior might of the Rāksasas. Thus when the eminent generals including his mighty brother Kumbhakarna were killed he still lay his confidence in Indrajit's prowess. He boosts up Meghanāda's spirit by saying that the latter by virtue of his penance, valour and arms is no leas than him and if the latter is with him the victory will surely be on his side.27

Of all the characters of the Rāmacharitamānasa of Goswami Tulasīdāsa, the most thought-provoking is that of Rāvaṇa, the villain, the tragic hero of the epic. The one single instance where

he showed appreciation of the higher values gives a glimpse into the working of his mind. On this occasion he said, 'If God has been born, then I shall force His enemity on myself, and will die with His arrow in my heart. If they (Rāma and Laksmana) are the sons of a king and mere human beings, I shall defeat them in battle and carry away Rāma's wife.' (Aranyakānda). In his first meeting with Sītā, though 'her words angered Rāvana, yet in his heart he saluted her feet and felt happy.' (Aranyakanda). From these remarks the spirit of devotion as also his craving for heavenly bliss is discerniable in the character of Rāvana, as presented by Tulasīdāsa. Of course, in the Rāmacharitamānasa Rāvana as a whole is presented as the wicked one, full of anger, arrogance and pride. According to the poet, the Bhakta poet, Ravana, the archtype of evil in the Indian tradition could attain salvation by the grace of God (Rāma). Tulasī's message was that divine grace can be achieved not merely through dedicated activity of love, but even through fear or hatred one (like Ravana) may progress towards Him.

Vālmīki's characterisation of Rāvaņa is superb. Rāvaņa is a character so complex in his admixture of strength and learning, naked hedonism and extreme self-denial, sensitiveness to beauty, fondness of affluence and other good things of life, coupled with extreme crudity, cruelty and selfishness. He has to die because he has rejected Dharma, and has accepted wrong ideals. Impulsively or driven by Fate, he has laid his hand Sītā.28 Foolishly be takes a mere fancy, a fleeting impulse to be his life's purpose and stakes his honour on it. He refuses to discuss the subject or listen to well-meant advice. He is a clear case of misplaced judgment. Blinded by passion and desire, he becomes a despot. He flouts the advices of his brother, friends, well-wishers, even wife. Only once, when he loses his faithful brother Kumbhakarna in battle, does he remember the advice given by Vibhisana and expresses regret for not having taken it. He says 'The words of Vibhisana come back to me with greater force. I was a fool not to have listened to him. I am suffering the consequences of my actions for having treated my brother in such a cruel manner'. But he did not think of surrendering Sītā to Rāma even at that late stage; destiny dragged him towards destruction and so he continued to combat against Rāma. This is what frequently happens to people, even when they realise their folly, they persist in it on account of false pride. Besides Vibhīṣaṇa Avindhyā, who may be called a moral Rākṣasa also advises Rāvaņa not to slay Sītā.29

Rāvaņa is a symbol not so much of individual selfishness, as of the whole malaise of a whole system of governance. The kingdom of Lańkā is based on arrogance and despotic rule. The wishes of the ruler are sovereign. Plunder and loot account for its wealth. Even uncles and cousins are not spared.30 Its army is meant for aggression and annexation of territory. In fact, the wealth and splendour of Lankā that had dazzled Hanumān, do not accrue from the labour and effort of its people. Hence nothing good could come of it. In contrast is the kingdom of Ayodhyā. Though ruled by a king, it is no autocracy. The king is guided and controlled by his council and competent ministers who interpret the law for him and lay down policy. At every stage the king has to consult the Guru and the Council of Elders and the Assembly of the people. In Ayodhyā, the will of the people is supreme, so much so that Rama has to abandon Sītā because the people will not have her.

Rāvaṇa's cabinet, on the other hand, is a collection of sycophants and flatterers, presided over by an egoistic hedonist. Anyone who dares to speak the truth, or points to Dharma and the rights of others is summarily dismissed. Vibhīṣaṇa is compelled to desert Rāvaṇa because he would not listen to his words. Rāvaṇa is the outcome of a totally materialistic society. His tragic end shows how the greatest may fall if they ignore Dharma and take a one-sided view of life trampling upon the rights and

ignoring the welfare of the common people.

Inspite of all his shortcomings Rāvana is a grand person with a great personality. He is a Rākṣasa, a villain, a fiend in so far as he is presented in the pages of religious literature of the country. Yet he is a true tragic hero of the epic. Vālmīki chose Rāma, the man par excellence, the Purusottama, for his hero. Unlike a tragic hero, Rāma succeeds in solving the crisis created by Kaikeyi by a non-grudging obedience to his father. This is due to the perfection of his character, which shows his perfect intelligence in realizing his self-sufficiency. He is, therefore, neither eager to have the crown nor reluctant to go to the forest. Rāma is the dhīrodatta (dhīr-patient, uddāta-magnanimous) hero of a poem of Rasa (delight) variety like the Rāmāyaņa, setting an ideal for others. The tragic hero fails to solve the problem created chiefly by his own narrow-minded, unintelligent, selfish response to a difficult situation. And in this respect Rāvaņa, is a tragic hero of the poem. Rāma suffers for his over-genorisity blended with ultra-democratic mind. He is too much conscious of his subjects who are generally prone to superstition and

hearsay. Rāvana, like Hamlet of Shakespeare, is pride-intoxicated and he has had to pay the price. He is Rākṣasa, proud Rākṣasa, most ignorant of what he is most assured. He had many a chance to chose the right or wrong. He chose the wrong and in consequence fell on the thorn of life and bled. He had a spectacular rise but had a similar fall in the end. He had a fatal flaw in his character, flaw of over-confidence in his own power, posing himself to be invincible. And this over-confidence bred with pride led his downfall. He was arrogant, defiant not heeding to any argument and he bore the consequence willingly, as it were. Side by side with his pride-intoxication he was infatuated with extreme passion, passion for women which made him machinate the abduction of Sītā, the chaste wife, the soul of Rāma. In his passionate desire to win over Sītā he, of course, played all viles and trickery, but the excess was tempered with restraint in case of his abducting Sītā, a quality so uncommon for a Rāksasa. With an impartial treatment one can see in Rāvana a medley of contradictions, a characteristic which is true also in case of both a common man and god. There is aberration in his actions, charlatanism in his leaps, yet he embodies a unique personality, a true representative of the great Rāksasa culture pervading the land of the time. As a matter of fact, Valmiki in narrating the course of events surrounding the life of Rāma and the movement of Aryan culture towards the South of this country has eventually depicted the life of the demon-king Ravana and the facets of the Dravidian culture.

REFERENCES:

- ¹ On Rāvaņa's raping Rambhā, Nalakuvera, the husband of Rambhā, curses Rāvaņa by saying that the latter would not enjoy any woman against her wish and if he does his head would be torn to seven pieces: akāma tena yasmāt tvam balād bhadre pradharṣitā/ tasmāt sa yuvatimanyam nakāmamupāyasyati// VII. 18.29.
- ² This might be a helmet bedecked with ten heads in order either to hoodwink the enemies or to show the prowess. This many-headed and many-handedness is a traditional medium for exhibiting super-power of the subject with whom the same is associated. Most of the gods and the goddesses of the Hindu pantheon are depicted with the plurality of limbs so as to impress their supra-power.
- Ravayamāsa lokān yat tasmād rāvaņa ucyate: Mārkaņdeya-purāņa, 274.40.
- ⁴ Pāṇini, *ibid.*, IV. 1.112; see also Mallinātha in his commentary on V. 91 Canto XII, Raghuvamsa. Pāṇini says that when the affix an in the

sense of a descendant thereof is applied to Viśravas, the substitute Rāvana somehow glides into its place to have received the said affix, so that the resultant patronymic from Visravas is not Vaisravana, as one might expect, but curiously enough the V. Ravana-Vaisravana.

- Ravanavagrahaklatam iti vagamrtena sah/ abhisichya marucchsyan krsnameghas tirododhe// The 'form of Ravana by ushering sweet words dispersed the black clouds from the corns tired of draught for a long time'. Here the black cloud symbolises Visnu i.e. Rama.
- ⁶ See Historicity of Rāmāyana & the Indo-Aryan Society in India & Ceylon by S. C. De, pp. 15-19; Sharotri, G. K., The Rāmāyaņa & its Impact in South-East Asia, p. 82.
- Cf. Herr Hitler's adopting such-like trick for confusing the opponent to get the real target.
- When Ravana, being maddened with sorrow and anger by the news of Laksmana's slaying his beloved son, Indrajit, was about to rush to the Asokan park killing Sitā (V. 53.20), his two eyes which were naturally red, became redder, and more fiery and fearful with the fire of his anger; tasya prakrtya raktetta rakte krodhagninapi ca/ Ravanasya mahaghore dipte netre vabhuvatun//

In the Rāmāyana there are references of (1) mūkuṭam (one helmet, 50.11); kīritam (one diadem, 49.138); When Rāvaņa fell fighting on the field of battle, his queens came near his dead body and grasped his two legs (charanam), his neck (kantham) and two hands (bhujaih). Some placed his head (sirah) on their laps and shed tears while looking at his face (mukham) with their tears, 53.80

- ime te nayane krure vikrte krsnapingale/ ksitau na patite kasmanamamanāryya nirīksatah// V. 22.78.
- 10 tasya kruddhasya netrābhyām prāptānumašru vindvaḥ/ dīpābhyām dīptābhyām sacisan snehavindavah// VII. 42.23.
- 11 According to Hikayat Maharaja Ravana Ravana had not, at first, ten heads when he was flying over the hermitage of a sage. The latter cursed him and as a result ten heads and twenty hands grew up and he was turned into a Rākṣasa. Cf. a similar myth in connection with Siva's taking the linga-form. In this work as also in the Hikayat Seri Rama and Maharadia Laoyana, Ravana is himself and not Marica, the golden (or silvery) deer or the deer with golden horn or golden goat.
- ¹² Das, N. C., A Note of the Antiquity of the Ramayana, p. 11.

12 Vaidya, C. V., op. cit., pp. 145-46.

- ¹⁴ Rāmāyana, VII. 16.103, 134; 'aho rūpam aho dhairyam aho sattvam aho dyutih, aho rakṣasarājasya sarvalaksanayukta.' O the beauty, firmness, goodness, glory and union of all marks of distinction in this king of the Rākṣasas. He further says, 'If he were not lawless, he would be a rakṣitr (rather than rākṣasa)'. Such is the remark made by an opponent. His enemy Rāma also calls him pious and learned in the Veda.
- 18 Rāvaņa was also a respecter of the āśramas or the four stages of the Aryan life. 'vedavidyāvratasnātah svakarmaniratastathā.'

16 Rāmāyaņa, V. 12.20; VI. 61.10. The Rāmāyaņa locates their home

A STUDY ON THE RAMAYANAS

among the Hyperboreans in the mountains beyond the Vaikhanasas (saints) and the land of horse-faced women (aśvamukhī-piśācīs) IV. 43.32 & 52. They are also seen on Kuvera's Gandhamādana and on the Krauñca mountain and Rāma finds the playground of Vidyādhara women on Citrakūṭa. (II. 94.129); they are also seen on the hills of Malabar (VI. 74.44) and even in the forest of Khandava (I. 228.37).

- 11 'tasya kopāt pīta rājan sasarjāatanam ātmana/ sa yajñe Viśravah nāma tasyātmardhana vai dvijah//
- 18 This has been dealt with in detail elsewhere.
- 1º See the Padma-purāņa, Bk. IV, Pātālakāņda.
- The Rākṣasa priests were also versed in the Vedas and in the six subsidiary sciences i.e. ṣadaṅga or vedāṅga viz. śikṣā (correct pronunciation), kalpa (ritual), vyākaraṇa (grammar) nirukta (a glossary of Vedic words), chanda (prosody) and jyotiṣa (astronomy). These priests who were well acquainted with sacrifices chanted the Vedas very early in the morning at Laṅkā (V. 18.2). These priests were known as Brahmarākṣasas; 'saḍaṅgaveda vidusamkratu pravarayajinam/ śuṣruva brahmaghoṣam sa virate brahmarakṣam//
- ²¹ Sundarakanda, 28.42; Winternitz, History of Sanskrit Literature, Vol. I, p. 263.
- ²² III. 38.7-14: 'na rāmastapasā devī na balena ca vikramaih/ na dhanene mayā tulyastejasā yasopi ca// O Lady, in penance, in strength, in valour, in affluence, in power or in fame Rāma could not equate himself with me. With coaxing words he tries to persuade Sītā to become his wife. When Sītā answers that she will never allow herself to be touched by him, he thereatens that if she does not yield herself to him within twelve months he will have her cut to pieces by the cooks and will eat her in his breakfast.
- mantramūlam ca vijayam prayadanti manasvīnah/ tasmād vai rocate mantram rāmam prati mahābalah// VI. 5.11-12.
- 24 sa tu samvatsaram kālam mamayacata bhāminī/ pratīkṣāmanā bhartāram rāmabhayatalocana/ tanmayā carnnegayah pratigñātam vacah śubhām//

VI. 12.18-19

28 Cf. Meghnādvadh-kāvya, 1st Canto:

ki kukshane (tor dukhe dukhi)
pāvak-sikhā rūpiņī Jānakīre āmi
āninnu e haima-grhe, hai icchā kare
chādiyā kanakalankā, nivida kānane
pasī, e maner jvālā judāi virale/
kusumadāma-sajjita, dīpavalī teje
ujjalatā nāţyasālā sama re āchila
e mor sundar puri/ kintu eke eke
sukhāiche phul eve, niviche deuţi;
nīrab rabāb, vīņa, muraj, murali,
tabe kèna ār āmi thāki re ekhāne;
kār re vāsanā vās karite āñdhāre.

I do not know on what inauspicious moment I had brought Jānakī, the

form of the flame of fire, to this golden palace. I wish I could leave the golden Lankā and entering some dense forest I could tame the agony of mind.

> vīr chūdāmaņi ki pāpe hārāinu āmi tomā hena dhane ki pāp dekhiyā mor, re dāruņ vidhi harili e dhan tui

The same sense of agony is noticeable. He curses himself for the loss of his beloved son, Vīrvāhu. He utters remorsefully that it is because of his sin that God has snatched away his son.

Rāvaņa's paternal heart cannot bear the pang of separation.

- mamanarūpam tapaso balam co te/
 parākramascastrabalam ca samyuge//
 na tvam samasadya raṇavamarde/
 manahsra māmgacchati niscitartham// VI. 51.27-31
- ²⁷ At one stage replaying to one of his senior ministers Malayvan, Rāvaṇa confesses his obstinate nature in the remark 'I may break into two, but I will not bend to anybody. This is a fault of my nature which I cannot overcome.' (VI. 36.11). That is he is fully conscious of his flaw but knowingly he cannot get rid of that.
- 28 Rāmāyana, III.280.56ff; V.37.118.
- Much of Lanka's wealth come from plundering Kubera, a cousin of Rāvana, and other relatives. The air-chariot was plundered from Kubera.
- ²⁰ The central feeling of 'tragedy' is the impression of waste, as Bradley pointed out about the Shakespearean tragedy. 'What a piece of work is man, we cry so much more beautiful and so much more terrible than we know'. (Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 23). We find that villainty never remains victorious in the end. The ultimate power in the tragic is a moral order. The tragic weakness is the evil that explodes the good in the tragic hero, and others around him are also damagingly affected. In tragic life passions spin the plot and we are betrayed by what is false within. The valuable effect of 'tragedy' lies in its disciplining our emotions and not letting them loose. The value of poetry lies in making the reader to the inner divine voice. The poet makes him listen to it in so subtle and sweet a manner that the reader is lured and offers himself to be educated. Tragedy performs the task in the negative way, by arousing terror in our heart at the violation of the natural moral law by the tragic hero. It rouses pity in us to realise this terror. Unless we sympathize with the tragic hero we cannot realize the terrible nature of the tragic weakness. In a tragedy he finds his animality, folly or ignorance or weakness or error of judgment depicted only to be exposed. He understands that a life of attachment is beset with snares, that is foolishly limiting his true self, stealing from his own natural self.

We can judge the character of Ravana on the above perspective.

keeper of the golden Lankā is the fiend-goddess Lankinī who played the part of a Sphynx of Egypt. It is only after satisfying her that Hanumāna could enter the gate of Lankā.

But above all women there is Sītā who acts as a pretext for sealing the fate of Rāvanism or demonism. She is the ideal of conjugal fidelity, the highest virtue of women. In the Rgveda Sītā, the name of the heroine of the epic, is the goddess of agriculture, the term meaning the furrow. She is mentioned in a hymn (IV.57) addressed to the lord of the fields (ksetrapati) and to other divinities associated with agriculture.2 In the Rāmāyana she is spoken of as having arisen from the earth and as finally disappearing into the womb of the Mother Earth.3 She is said to be the daughter of Janaka, one of the kings of Videha. Probably because of her birth during the Spring, she is practically described in the Rāmāyana as having sprung from a furrow (sītā) during the ritual ploughing by her father at the beginning of the Spring sowing and hence her epithet 'Ayonija' (not womb-born). There are interesting episodes around Sītā's birth in various sources. In the Maudgalya Rāmāyana and in a folk version4 also Sītā was Rāvaņa's daughter and Rāvaņa, being warned that she would cause his death, threw her into the sea (cf. Kamsa's fear that he would die at the hand of the son born of the eighth womb of Devaki, his sister and his subsequent decision of killing all the sons born of Devaki). In the Malay version of the Rāmāyana and in the Serat Kanda Sītā is daughter of Dasaratha and Mandodari. As soon as she is born, she is put in a box and thrown into the sea. Janaka (Kāla in Javanese) finds the box while performing his morning ablutions, takes out Sītā and brings her up. In the Adbhuta Rāmāyana Nārada curses Laksmī that she is to be born as a Rāksasī. In the Siamese version also Sītā is the daughter of Rāvaņa. In a Ceylonese tale she is born of the blood of ascetics collected by Ravana.6 In the Uttarapurana of the Jainas Sītā is the daughter of Rāvana.

In the third act of the *Uttaracharita* Bhavabhūti presents a shadow (chhāyāmayī), bodyless Sītā and not the real Sītā. It might be that the poet has in his mind only to express the feelings and emotions of Rāma living in Pañcavaṭī without Sītā. Should we think that Sītā did not accompany Rāma when the latter had to leave Ayodhyā to lead a forest life being banished by his father on the court-intrigue nurtured cleverly by Kaikeyī, the favourite queen of the old king. In the *Vālmīki Rāmāyana* the narration is different and the facts are stated to justify the ideal character of Sītā. There before Rāma proceeded to the forest he asks Sītā

to be friendly to Bharata, to live piously and continently at the court of Daśaratha and to serve his father and mothers obediently. But Sītā answers him in a magnificient speech on the duties of a wife, that nothing shall prevent her from following him into the forest.⁷

Opinions differ as regards the age of Sītā when she got married. In her talk with Ravana8 at Pancavati Sīta informs him that at the time Rāma was banished from Ayodhyā she was eighteen years of age and that her marriage had taken place twelve years earlier. This would mean that Sītā was a child of six at the time of marriage. But on her earlier account, Sītā's father, Janaka, was greatly worried when she had attained an age fit for being united to a husband. The age of six could hardly be taken to mean this. Moreover it should be borne in mind that a long interval had elpased between Sītā's attaining the marriageable age and her actual marriage with Rāma, during which period various princes came to try to win her hand, saw the great bow and, not being able to lift it up, returned disappointed. They then combined and invested Mithila and more than one year elapsed before the investment was raised. This Sītā was matured enough at the time of her actual marriage to Rāma, for Janaka proclaimed his pana or marriage vow on finding her having attained the fit age for marriage. Obviously, she had attained the age of discretion also when she could imbibe the salutary advice given by her mother during her marriage ceremony.9 Janaka himself tells Viśvāmitra that scores of kings have come to seek the hand of his youthful (vardhamana) daughter, but gone away disappointed, having failed in the physical test. 10 Thus, the consensus of evidence furnished by the epic leads to the conclusion that Sītā at her wedding was a full-grown maiden, fit for conjugal union, endured with the faculty of prudence, and fully initiated by her parents with regard to her wifely responsibilities.

Sītā is the paragon of pativratās whom the Rāmāyaṇa depicts in all exuberance of poetry. Her heroic endurance of all sufferings, her proud rejection of the advances of the Rākṣasa king and her unwavering love for her husband—all these make her the embodiment of the ideal wife. Sītā is tender and mild, soft and dreamy as the moonlight, but she can turn into a strong heroine of daring and unyielding pride when it comes to defending her virtue. Thus Rāvaṇa could never venture to commit an outrage on her whose infallible chastity served as protecting belt to her purity of conduct.¹¹ She felt herself quite equal to the task of

reducing her abductor to a heap of ashes, but she desisted from this for want of Rāma's permission and for fear of the loss of penance the act would entail.¹²

Greater part of Sītā's education was post-marital, influenced partly by her husband and partly by the special environments of her long periods of exile from court. All the same, her early years of maidenhood at her parental home were not completely barren, and she must have received some sort of elementary education. She must have been taught to read and write; she was certainly literate, for later we find her in Lanka reading and recognising the engraved autograph of her husband on the ring sent her through Hanumana.13 From the fact of Hanumana deliberating over the language in which he should accost Sītā at the Aśoka grove in Lanka,14 it appears that she knew three kindred languages—the manusi, the dvijāti and the vānara. She must have read besides a metrical book of Animal Fables and committed a good deal of it to the memory in her girlhood; for in the course of her conversation with Hanumana she refers to 'puranic ślokas sung by Rksa' and quotes from memory.15

While she was yet unmarried, a sāma-vṛtta bhikṣunī (nun of restrained senses) is said to have come to her father's court and told her mother about her future life in forest retreats. As pointed out by a scholar what this nun told Sītā's mother was clearly about the outstanding traits of Sītā's character as they appeared to her which, in her view, marked the girl out for a cloistered career in afforest retreat or a life in the midst of nature. There is no need of reading into this mere prophecy of future exile, but rather an instance of recognition of discovery of a student type in a girl by a lady teacher. The truth of the bhikṣunī's estimate is corroborated by the many consistent illustrations throughout the epic of Sītā's love for nature and āśrama surroundings as also by the learning and refinement she did acquire in the āśramas during her exile.

Sītā must have obtained, at her father's house, a grounding in Vedic mantras and in a queen's duties towards a state (rāja dharma¹8). Like her mother-in-law Sītā was in active touch with educational institutions at Ayodhyā—a fact which alone can explain the intimate relationship of a sakhī (lady-friend) existing between Sītā and Suyajita's wife. Long periods of residence in the midst of teachers and students of āśramas and the ennobling, genial company of the inmates thereof—renowned sages and bright students, venerable matrons and sweet girls—was satisfied

not yet satiated by her twelve or thirteen years' sojourn in various asrama settlements. 19

After twelve years of aśrama-residence, Sītā could pride herself on being a pandita, a learned lady; though to Ravana she was a pandita-māninī (vainglorious lady) and mudhā (fool) besides to reject his offer of becoming his consort.20 There were several occasions during her captivity which show incidentally that she had in course of these long years become a fairly learned woman. Her allusions to obstetric surgery²¹ while conversing with Hanumana testifies to her acquaintance with scientific dissection of foetus (in abnormal maternity cases conducted by the āśrama surgeon). She herself uses a language befitting a pandita. She considers herself a fit consort of Rāma alone, just as vidyā or highest knowledge belongs to only one who is vrata-snāta and viditātma.22 Her appreciation of finding in Hanumāna a harmonious (śobhanā) blend of certain specific physical, intellectual and moral excellences, and of his ideal speech indicative of complete (eightfold) development of the process of understanding²³ shows that she as was thoroughly conversant with the professional knowledge of the teachers of her time. Here again, the description of Sita's bearing in education and culture indicates the general level attained by well-bred ladies in these spheres.

Sītā is depicted as the noblest flower of Indian womanhood, the quintessence of strī-dharma as conceived at that age. Accepting the lofty canons of conjugal life, she remains true to her lord in thought, word and deed, in spite of the numerous trials and tribulations she has to undergo. Whether during her captivity at Lankā, or in the ordeal of fire, whether abandoned on the forest, carrying Rāma's burden in the womb, or called upon to adduce proofs of her inocence a second time before the people, Sītā, the perfect wife that she was, bore patiently her agonies and performed her proper duty by praying continually for the welfare of Rāma and his subjects, being convinced that her virtuous husband thus treated her harshly only for upholding the impossible dharma of a king.²⁴

REFERENCES:

¹ Cf. the Etruscan god Tages who appeared in the furrow ploughed by Tarchon, Taittiriya Samhitā, v.25.

² The importance of ritual ploughing by the ruler in person occurs in other countries, including Ceylon and China. Hopkins suggests that Sītā is a kind of Corn Mother, and hence represented by a ploghshare.

- Epic Mythology, p. 12. See also Jan Gonda, Aspects of Early Visnuism, p. 116.
- 'Cf. the French synonyms for furrow, especially 'tranche', which is also a slang for vulva. In one of the marriage hymns of the Atharvaveda (XIV.2-14) the bride is linked to a field, for woman is the 'everlasting field'. See Mahābhārata (Bombay ed.) 1.74.40ff. cited by Basham, Wonder that was India, p. 182. Cf. Koran (II.22) 'Your women are your plough-land'.
- ⁴ Cited by N. Aiyangar. According to Raglan both Rāma and Sītā were of divine origin, Sītā being born from a furrow in a ploughed field, that is, interably from a fertility ritual, wherein the hero and heroine are brother and sister. See P. Spratt, Hindu Culture and Personality, pp. 147-49.
- ⁶ Nearest to the Malay version is a folk-tale in which a man's daughter is put in a box and floats down the sea to a fisherman's hut and later on the father comes to win her hand in marriage. *Indian Antiquary*, XXII, p. 315.
- ⁶ Indian Antiquary, XLV, p. 84. This tale has been heard by B. R. Chatterji, author of History of Indonesia, in the hills of the Kangra district. In this respect Stuttenheim's remark is worth quoting 'instead of accusing the Javanese of having tampered with the Rāma tradition to suit their own outlook on life, the same charge may be levelled against Vālmīki himself for having in a refined version of earlier and cruder accounts' See B. R. Chatterji, History of Indonesia, pp. 95-8.
- Rāmāyaṇa, II. 27. According to Sītā 'The wife alone, whatever await, must share on earth her husband's fate. Her husband is her sole defence. A thousand seasons would flee like one sweet day, if spent with her husband. Without her lord she would not prize a home with gods above the skies. Without her lord, for her there could not be heaven or happiness.' Rāma then describes to her all the terrors and dangers of the forest, in order to dissuade her from her resolve. But she remains firm and will hear nothing of a separation, as Sāvitrī once followed Satyavat, so, she says, will she not leave him.
- Rāmāyaņa, II. 47.4.
- ° Ibid., II. 118.34, 44-48.
- 10 Ibid., I. 66.15-9.
- " Ibid., III. 47.42-48; V. 22.12.22.
- 12 Ibid., V. 22.20.
- 13 Ibid., IV. 14.12-3.
- 14 Ibid., V. 30.17-9.
- 15 Ibid., VI. 113.41.
- 18 Ibid., II. 29.13.
- ¹⁷ Sarkar, S. C., Some Aspects of the Earliest Social History of India, p. 63.
- 18 Rāmāyaņa, II. 26.4.
- 19 Sarkar, S. C., op. cit., p. 66.
- 20 Rāmāyaņa, III. 49.13-4.

APPENDIX II

21 Ibid., V. 28.6.

129

²² That is one who comes back to home-life duly after the ceremonial bath concluding his course of studies including the doctrine of ātman. Rāmāyaṇa, V. 21.17.

²³ Ibid., VI. 113.24-6.

²⁴ Ibid., VII. 48.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Altekar, A. S., Education in Ancient India, 4th ed., Varanasi, 1951:
 ———— (The) Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, 2nd ed., Varanasi, 1956.
- Arunachalam, S., Sketches of Ceylon History, Madras, 1948.
- Anand, Mulk Raj, (The) Hindu View of Art, London, 1933.
- Atkins, A. G., Rāmāyaņa of Tulsīdās, vol. II, Calcutta, 1970.
- Bandyopadhyaya, A. K., Bānglā Sāhityer Sampūrņa Itivritta (Bengali), Revised 4th ed., 1978.
- Baumgartner, A., Das Rāmāyana und die Rāmaliteratur der Inder, Freiburg, 1894.
- Bhagat, M. G., Ancient Indian Asceticism, Delhi, 1976.
- Bhandarkar, D. R., Some Aspects of Ancient Indian Culture, Madras, 1940.
- Bhandarkar, R. G., Vainsavism, Saivism and Other Minor Religious Systems, Indian ed., Poona, 1928.
- Bulcke, C., 'About Valmiki'. Journal of the Oriental Institute, vol. III, pt. 2.
- Chakravarti, C., (The) Literary History of Ancient India, Calcutta, n.d. Chakladar, H. C., Social Life in Ancient India, 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1954.
- Chatterji, B. R., Indian Cultural Influence in Cambodia, Calcutta, 1928.
- Chatterji, S. K., 'Non-Aryan Elements in Indo-Aryan'. JAIS, II, 42.
- (The) Rāmāyana, Its character, genius, history, expansion, exodus: a resumé, Calcutta, 1978.
- Chaucer, G., Nun Priestes Tale, R. W. V. Elliott (ed.), London, 1960.
- Coedes, G., Les Etats Hindouises d'Indochine et d'Indonesia, Paris, 1948.
- Coomaraswamy, A. K., History of Indian and Indonesian Art, London, 1927.
- Das, N. C., A note on the Antiquity of the Ramayana, Calcutta 1899.

 A Note of the Ancient Geography of Asia, compiled from the Vālmīki Rāmāyana, Calcutta, 1895.
- Das Gupta, S. N., History of Sanskrit Literature, vol. I, Calcutta, 1947. De, S. C., Historicity of Rāmāyaņa and the Indo-Aryan Society in India and Ceylon, Delhi, 1976.
- Dikshitar, V. R. R., Matsya-Purāņa: A Study, 2nd ed., Madras, 1984.

 Studies in Tamil Literature and History, London, 1930.
- Dutt, M. M., Meghnādvadh-kāvya (Bengali).
- Dutta, M. N., Translation of the Rāmāyana, 3 vols., Calcutta, 1889-91.

Dutt, R. C., History of Civilization in Ancient India, London, 1893.

Farquhar, J. N., An Outline of the Religious Literature of India, Oxfrod University Press, London, 1920.

Frazer, R. W., A Literary History of India, London, 1915.

Ganganath, J., Baudhayana's Prayaschitta for Sea-Voyage, Lahore, 1935.

Geiger, W., Ceylon, Wiesbaden, 1898.

---- Mahavamsa (ed. & tr.), London, 1902.

Ghosal, U. N., 'Dynastic Chronicles of Kashmir'. IHQ, XVIII, pp. 195-207; 302-41; XIX, pp. 27-38; 156-72.

Ghurye, N., Vedic India.

Gita Press, Gorakhpur: Vālmiki-Rāmāyaņa, V.S. 2017.

Gore, N. A., (A) Bibliography of the Rāmāyana, Poona, 1943.

Gorresio, G., Rāmāyaṇa (ed. & tr.), Bengali recension, Turin, 1843-67.

Griffith, R. T. H., Vālmīki Rāmāyaņa (tr.), Turner & Co., London, 1870.

Hastings, J., Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (ed.), vols. V and VII, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh.

Heimann, J., Indian and Western Philosophy, London, 1924.

Hiralal, Avadhi-Hindi Prāntmen Rāma-Rāvana Yuddha (Hindi), Lexicon Commemoration Volume, Varanasi, 1929.

Hopkins, E. W., The Great Epic of India, New York, 1901.

Iyer, T. P., Rāmāyaṇa and Lankā, Bangalore, 1940.

Jacobi, H., Das Rāmāyaņa, Bonn, 1893.

Jātaka, ed. V. Fausboll, 7 vols. (vol. 7 Index by D. Andersen), London, 1877-97.

Jouveau-Dubreuil, G., Ancient History of the Deccan (Eng. tr.), Pondicherry, 1920.

Kaegi, A., The Rigueda, tr. R. Arrowsmith, Boston, 1886.

Kalhana, Rājatarangini, ed. Durga Prasad, Bombay, 1892.

Kālidāsa, Raghuvamsa, tr. M. A. Stein, London, 1900.

Kalyanaraman, A., Aryatarangini; The Saga of the Indo-Aryans, Madras, 1969.

Kane, P. V., A History of Dharmaiastra, vol. 2, pt. 1, Bhandarkar Research Institute, Poona, 1941.

Kautilya, Arthaiastra, ed. R. Samasastry, 3rd ed., Mysore.

Keith, A. B., The Sanskrit Drama, Oxford, 1924.

Khan, B., The Concept of Dharma in Valmiki-Ramayana, Delhi, 1965

Kunhan Raja, C., Survey of Sanskrit Literature, Delhi, 1962.

Ladd, W., Origin of Champa, Java and Tibet, London, 1937.

Law, B. C., Aśvaghosha's Buddacharita, Eng. tr. S. Ketkar, Calcutta, 1946.

- Datha-vamsa, ed. & tr., Calcutta, 1943.

Lokesh Chandra et. al., India's Contribution to the World Thought and Culture, Madras, 1970.

Macdonell, A. A., History of Sanskrit Literature, London, 1900.

Mahābhārata, Eng. tr. K. K. Ganguly, Calcutta, 1884-86. New ed. Calcutta, 1926-27.

Majumdar, S. N., ed. Cunningham's Ancient Geography of India, Calcutta, 1924.

Majumdar, R. C., Ancient India, Calcutta, 1960.

--- Corporate Life in Ancient India, 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1922.

Hindu Colonies in the Far East, Calcutta, 1944.

Mahton, B. N., The Theory of Government in the Rāmāyana, Bombay, 1951.

Mānava Dharmasāstra, Eng. tr. W. Jones, Calcutta, 1794.

Maspero, G., Le Royaume de Campa, Paris, 1950.

Max Muller, F., Rāmakrishna: His Life and Sayings, Advaita Ashram, Calcutta, 1951.

Mehta, R., Pre-Buddhist India, Delhi, 1945.

Milton, J., Paradise Lost, Bks. I and IV.

Mitra, R., Indo-Aryans, vol. 1, London, 1881.

Mongalaba, M., tr. Balarāma Dāsa's Rāmāyaņa, Delhi, 1966.

Mookerjee, R. K., Ancient Indian Education, London, 1947.

Mookherji, T., Adhunik Bangla Kavya (Bengali), Calcutta, 1972.

Muir, J., Original Sanskrit Texts, vol. II, London, 1871.

Oppert T., Original Inhabitants of India, London, n.d.

Pargiter, F. E., Ancient Indian Historical Tradition, London, 1922.

The Purana Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age, Oxford, 1913. Parker, H., Ancient Ceylon, London, 1909.

Radhakrishnan, S., Bhāgavat Gitā (tr.), George Allen & Unwin, London 1948.

- Religion and Society.

Ramakrishna, Life of Shri Rāmakrishņa, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.

Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, The Cultural Heritage of India, vol. 2, 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1962.

Rāmāyaṇa, Raghu Vira (ed.), First Fasc., Lahore, 1938.

Rapson, E. J., Cambridge History of India, vol. 1, Cambridge, 1935.

Rice, B. L., ed. Pampa Rāmāyaṇa, Bangalore, 1892.

Sastri, P. P. S., Vālmīki-Rāmāyaņa, Madras, 1935.

Sen, D. C., Bengali Rāmāyana, Calcutta, 1932.

Shakespeare, W., The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, Ref. Tempest, Abbey Library, 1978, pp. 9-30.

Siddhanta, N. K., The Heroic Age of India, London, 1929.

de Silva, W. A., Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1927.

Sivaramamurti, C., Royal Conquests and Cultural Migrations in South India and the Deccan, Indian Museum, Calcutta, 1954.

Smith, V. A., History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon, 2nd ed., Revised by K. de B. Codrington, Oxford, 1930.

Spellman, W., Political History of Ancient India, London, 1954.

Spratt, P., Hindu Culture and Personality, Delhi, 1977.

Stuttenheim, W., Rāma Legenden und Rāma Reliefs in Indonesian, Berlin, 1948.

Stutley, M. & J. Sundaracharya, T., A Dictionary of Hinduism, Bombay, 1977. Studies in the Rāmāyaņa Women Characters, Madras, 1945.

Swami, Nikhilananda, Bhāgavad Gītā, tr. with notes, comments introduction, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, New York, 1944.

Swami Vivekananda, The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda (8 volumes), 4th ed., Advaita Ashram, Calcutta.

Tagore, R. N., Mānasī, Chitra (Bengali); Vichitrā, Vishvabharati Granthalaya, 1961.

Temple, S. R. C., The Legends of the Punjab, London, 1900.

Thakur, U., Some Aspects of Ancient Indian History and Culture, Delhi, 1958.

Thapar, R., Ancient Indian Social History, Delhi, 1978.

Trisasthisalākā pursacharita, tr. Johnson's Gaekwad's Oriental Series, Baroda, 1931-54.

Tod, W., Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan, Rerinted two volumes in one, London, 1950.

Tulasidasa, Goswami, Dohāvalī, tr. H. P. Poddar, Gorakhpur, 1968.

Vaidya, C. V., The Riddle of the Rāmāyana, Bombay, 1906.

Valvalkar, P. H., Hindu Social Institutions, Bombay, 1939.

Varahamihira, Brhat Samhitā, ed. & tr. V. S. Sastri & N. R. Bhat, Bombay, 1947.

Visvanatha, S. V., International Law in Ancient India, London, 1940.

Vyas, S. N., India in the Rāmāyaņa Age, Delhi, 1967; Rāmāyaņa-kālina Samāja (Hindi), New Delhi, 1964.

Weber, A., History of Indian Literature, Eng. tr. J. Mann & T. Zacharia, 2nd ed., London, 1861.

Williams, M., Indian Epic Poetry, London, 1863.

Wilson, H. H., Specimens of the Hindu Theatre, London, 1861.

Winternitz, M., A History of Indian Literature, vol. 1, Calcutta, 1927.

JOURNAL

Sir Asutosh Mukherji Silver Jubilee Volumes, vol. III, pt. 1, 1922.

Buddhist Text Society Journal, vol. IV, pt. 1.

Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.

Indian Historical Quarterly, No. XVIII.

Indian Antiquary, vols. XXI & XXII.

Journal of Asiatic Society of India, No. II.

Journal of the Malay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1924.

Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1917.

Orientalia, pt. 1.

Proceedings India Office Catalogue, II.

The Siam Society, the Fiftieth Annual Commemoration Volume, Bangkok.

INDEX

Adam 46 Adhyātma-Rāmāyana 51 Adi-Rāmāyana 51, 59 Agastya 8, 9, 20 Agni 14 agnihotri 112 Ailas 37 Ajātašatru 83 alamkāras 52 Alexander 27 Amarakañtaka 31 amrta sañjivani 67 Andhra 19 andhā 35 Añjana 35 Annam 41 Ardhanāriśvara 46 Arjuna 26 Ārya Samāj 2 Asmaka 37 Aśoka 17 āśramas 125 Astādhyāyi 57 Asura 17, 18 Aśvaghosha 3, 54, 85 asvamedha 113 ātmabodha 47 avatāra 9 Avindhyā 116 Ayonija 55, 124

Babylon 42 Bālakānda 41 Balbutha 16 Bali 71, 76 Baluchistan 14 Basas 18 Baudhāyans 41 Bellary 35 Bengal 79 Beowulf 35 Bhagavata-Purana 97 Bhagiratha 38 bhakti 81 Bhavabhūti 124 Bhrgu-Phrygians 98 Borneo 41 Buddha 46 Buddhacarita 29, 85 Buddhism 51 58, 78 Bodhisattva 2 Buddhist Canon 52 Busiris 11

Caityana 82
Cambodia 3, 53, 71, 76
Cardamum 20
cavern 32
caitya-prāsāda 21
chāraṇas 11, 58
Chaucer 6
Chyāvana 98
Ciraman 78
Colo 37
Colombo 20
Corn Mother 127

Dānavas 11 Dandaka 55 Dandakāranya 23, 31 Daśagriva 67 daśānana 108, 111 Dāsa 16, 25 Dasaratha 10 Dasyu 13, 14 Deccan 8. 9 Devaki 124 Devas 17 dhan 59 dhānya 50 Dharmasāstras 15 Dharmayuddha 25 Druhvus 38 dundubhi 34

Egypt 39, 42 Egyptians 41 Eve 46 Ezhuttacchan 78

Gandhāra 38
Gandharvas 11
Gaṇeśa 111
Gaṅgā 10, 40
Gārhasthairama 83
Gāyatrī 39
Gilgit 24
God-Rāma 7
goṇdi 31
Gonds 31

Grhyasūtras 83	Keats 49
Guhaka 6, 7	Kerālā 37
	Khetas 31
halarekhā 49	Khotan 3
Harappans 16	Kirātas 7
Harivamsa 97	Kośala 14, 31, 38
hemanta 50	Kośāmbi 43
Hikayat Mahārāja Rāvaņa 119	Krittivāsa 7, 80, 82
Hiuen-tsang 27, 31	kṛṣi 41
Homer 103	Kşatriyas 8, 9
Ho Ton Tinh 71	Kşetrapati 124
	Kuśa 39
Iksvāku 7, 10	kūţayuddha 25
Illiad 11, 92	Kuvera 26
Indra 10, 11, 14	
Indumati 40	Lādu 17
	Lalitavistāra 85
Janaka 10, 49, 124	Lańkāpatanam 20
Janasthāna 23	Lava Rāmāyana 76
Jātakas	
Anamaka 56	Māddī 56
Dasaratha 54, 76	Mādhava Kandali 69
Jayaddissa 56	Madhu the Dānava 112
Nalinika 56	Mahābhāsya 57
Sama 56	Mahāvamsa 21, 27
Vessantara 55, 56	Mahāvīracarit 68
Java 3, 70, 71	Mahendra 17, 21
Jesus 46	Malay Rāmāyana 16, 73
Jhelum 31	Māldiva 18
Jogjakarta 77	Māndhātā 38
Jutindara 19	Mandodarī 74, 123
	man-Rāma 7
Kalakavana 42	Mantharā 122
Kālāsoka 43	Manu 38
Kālidāsa 3, 39, 40	Mārica 46
Kaliyuga 41	Marudeśa 31
Kalmaspāda 38	Mārutī 11
Kalmyks 78	Mātāli 15
Kalpamanditika 54	Maudgalya Rāmāyana 124
Kāmādri 31	Māyā 47
Kāmarūpa 33	Māyāvids 33
Kamban 7, 62	Megasthenes 43
Kang-Seng-Hui 77	Meghnāda 15
Kānyakubja 38, 43	Meghnād-vadh 85, 86, 88, 115
Karna 40	Memphis 9, 11
Kārtavīrya 29	Milton 88
Kāsirāma 81	Mon-Khmer 38
Kassites 39	Mukunda Kavikankan 98
Kāsyapa 16	Munda 38
Katara-gāma 17	
Kātyāyana 37	Nāgananda 78
Kavatapura 16, 19 Kavi 41	Nāgas 17
TANK TI	Nara 18

Nārada 7
nārasamsi 8, 58
Narasimha Ojha 81
Nārāyaņa 39
Narmada 31
narottama 7
Nikumbhila 20
nirvāņa 47
Niṣādas 7

Odyssey 11, 92 Ojadipa 17 Oriya Rāmāyaņa 77 Oraons 31, 110

Padma 81 Pampa 7, pana 125 pandita 127 Pāndya 37 Pāṇīni 14, 37, 43, 57 Panis 15, 16, 25 Parākramabāhu 21 paramānna 122 Paramātmā 47 Parasurāma 29, 63 Parasus 24 Pātaliputra 43 Patañjali 14, 57 pativratās 125 Paumācārva 53 Periplus of the Erythrean Sea 18 Pharaoh 39 Piśāchas 14 Pole Star 29 Prakāsarāma 78 Prakrti 46 Pramīlā 123 Prasravana 34 Priam 11 Punyajana 16 Purāņas 41, 50 Purusa 46, 47 Puspaka 21

Raghunandan 65 Rājagṛha 101 Rājataraṅgṇɨ 43 Rājāvali 21 Rakṣaṇis 21 Rāmacaritam 78

Rāmacaritamānasa 115, 116

Rāmakathā 87, 105
Rāma-Ker 72
Rāma Kling 16
Ramakrishna 3, 47
Rāmāyaṇa Pāncāli 82
Rāmāyaṇa Purāṇa 60
Ratnākara 98
Rāvaṇism 124
Romaka 29
Rsis 51

Sabari 6 Sahasravāhu 63 Sāketa 43 Salakāpurusa 2 Sama-vrtta bhiksuni 125 Sāmānya Phala Sutta 83 Sambhal 31 Sampati 19 Samula 56 Sańkarācārya 47 Sanskrit Works 68 Saraldāsa 69 Saramā 11 Satan 88 Satapatha Brāhmana 58 Saurastra 19 Serandib 16, 17 Serat Rama 72 Shakespeare 6 Ships 16 Siddhārtha 29 Silan 21 Simhala 17 Simhapura 17, 31 Sings 18 Siva 111 Skanda Kārttikeya 17, 26 Skandapurāna 17 Soma 14, 22 Sphynx 124 Śrāvastī 43 stri-dharma 127 Suka 34 Sumalin 18, 19 Sundarakānda 39 Surpanakhā 123 Supārśva 40 śūnya 39 sūryahrdaya 39 Svayambhu 61

Synges 96

A STUDY ON THE RAMAYANAS

Tāmraparņi 17, 20 Tārā 123 Tārakāsura 17 Taxila 101 Tennyson 60 Troy 9, 11 Tudor England 79 Tulasīdāsa 115

138

Uruksati 23 Uttaracarita 124 Uttarakānda 34 Uttarapurāna 124

Vaisnava Ācārya 79 Vaisravaņa 21 Varāhamihira 21 Vararāja 18 varņas 20 Vasistha 38 Vastudanti 39 Vergil 60 Vidyādharas 53, 60 Vijaya 26 Vilanka Rāmāyana 77
vimšatibhuja 108
Vinasana 42
Vindhya 9, 19, 33
Virbāhu 87
Viṣṇu 1, 9
Viśvakarmā 22
Viśvāmitra 39
Vittipot 18
Vivekananda 3, 8, 47
Vizagapatnam 32
vrātyas 15, 25
vrātyostoma 16
Vṛtra 11
Vyāsa 52

Welimada 28

yakşas 11, 17 yătudhanas 13 Yakovarman 70 Yogavāsistha Rāmāyaņa 97 Yajurveda 59

CC-0. In Public Domain. Funding by IKS-MoE

Dalla

Digitized by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust.

Digitized by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in 1923 in a middle-class family of Bengal the author graduated with Honours in History from the Calcutta University. From the same University he took his M.A. degrees in several subjects including English and Modern History and obtained his Ph.D. in the Ancient Indian History and Culture. He also became a Law graduate and has an expert knowledge in Hindi in which he took his Sāhitva-Ratna degree from the Hindi University, Allahabad, He is a teacher, prolific writer and reputed scholar of Indology and with his acumen and erudition he has gained a wide mark by writing books and scholastic papers which have since been published. The present work is the result of his specialised study on the subject.

Digitized by eGangotri and Sarayu Trust. CC-0. In Public Domain. Funding by IKS-MoE